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THE BELIEVER
FREE
FROM THE LAW

C. O. ROSENIUS



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THE BELIEVER FREE
FROM THE LAW

THE BELIEVER FREE FROM THE LAW

BY
C. O. ROSENIUS

TRANSLATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY
ADOLF HULT



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Life and Writings of Rosenius

An Appreciation

A spiritual masterpiece of clear, deep and intensive Bible study is here presented to the Church of America. It may well be reckoned among devotional classics. This is Scripture-research at its very best. Bible students at home, in schools, in vocational pursuits will find it a model of inquiry into the heart of the Word of God, not merely about the Word. Christ and His grace forms its centre. The prospects opened up in Christ for redeemed souls is its song. Seekers after salvation will have blest aid in finding faith and Christian certainty.

Its author has not before been known in America by any published volume in English. Carl Olof Rosenius, Lutheran lay-preacher and leader of a mighty spiritual awakening during the last century, must doubtlessly be called the greatest popular Scripture expositor among laymen in the Church of the Reformation. This may seem a surprising statement. But a study of the works of various lands forces that conviction upon us. Only Bogatzky (1690—1774), the Silesian nobleman, approaches Rosenius, without having that

wonderful reach, lucidity, and power of lasting appeal distinctive of Rosenius. "Brilliant gifts", which a biographer (Dibelius) says were wanting in the consecrated and spiritual Bogatzky, were eminently marked in Rosenius.

"The Believer Free from the Law" gives a plain understanding of a seldom clearly presented teaching in the Word: *The state of grace* (Rom. 5. 1). In a fresh evangelical way it makes the prayerful Scripture-student see what we possess, and what is wrought, if we come to Christ as penitent believers, and find all in Him, through faith alone. And in an age when the religious life is so moralized and self-sufficient as to-day, it will, of course, be of utmost importance to learn from the Scriptures what it truly signifies that a sinner may stand in grace with God. That it is a state of fellowship, resting in the blood and merit of Christ, that it is a constant relation to the faithful Redeemer and Lord, that so long as there is true faith in Christ, however weak that faith, we are, in spite of all sins and frailties, His beloved children — this glorious content of the state of grace the restless and experimenting souls to-day need to be taught, I may say, from the inner organism of the Word, its total spirit and whole economy of salvation. That will test to the finish the genuineness of their condition. It will for the anguished, but still faithful, also be a sweet and comforting re-

lease. How it puts "a new song" (Is. 42. 10; Rev. 5. 9) into their heart, upon their lips, into their life! Their testimony will not remain words, but "winged things, with colors dipt in heaven." Christ increases. We decrease (John 3. 30). His redemption looms big. Our sins sink into insignificance, for His grace abounds more exceedingly (Rom. 5. 20). A flood of transfiguration light falls on our sonship with God in Christ. Because the nervous Christianity of our time has so frequently become estranged from the "state of grace" teaching of the Word, it lacks peace, joy, power, and wisdom in the Holy Spirit. It agitates religiously rather than "rests in the Lord" (Ps. 37. 7) believably. It has grown so critical of what it calls "impractical Christianity," that with all its stupendous plans and amazing achievements in church work, its voice is well nigh husky with the long outcry: 'Give me success, and power, and joy, or I die.' The more it strains its will, the more it grows "troubled about many things" (Luke 10. 41). Even its very Bible-study often becomes a frittering inquiry for detailed knowledge in the Bible Book, while to "lay hold on the life eternal" and to "fight the good fight of the faith" (I Tim. 6. 12) becomes the duty of itinerant inspirationists that are to grip the religious audiences. Hence there is a feverish seeking of man-made substitutes. Among the most subtly dangerous

of these substitutes is that "perfect holiness" of *our* life, and *our* work, an error to-day trapping zealous, but uninstructed souls. Our always frayed garment of holiness replaces Christ's royal robe of perfect righteousness. "Zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10. 2), glowingly and passionately thrusts itself forward in the room of "the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Not seldom do we find pitifully serious hearts that are frantically looking for the "power of the Holy Spirit," as they call it, and their need is: A simple penitence and a plain faith in the merits and righteousness of Christ their Saviour.

Insight into "the state of grace", when changed through faith into a Spirit-worked living experience, steadies Christian faith and life. It hallows our walk. The life of believers becomes evangelical and through faith alone acceptable for Christ's sake, by His covering merit. Oh, how the Church of America needs this truth of Scripture and of sound Christian experience! In this special theme Rosenius is a master like his still greater teacher, Martin Luther.

A few data from the life of Rosenius will interest American readers.

Carl Olof Rosenius was born in romantic Northern Sweden at Nysaetra, February 3, 1816. His father was a vicar, a man of piety, and held

in esteem by the Christians of his region. From his mother, daughter of a school teacher, Rosenius inherited that keenness and clarity of mind so prominent in his preaching, writing, and care of souls. Through the reading of Bishop Pontoppidan's searching book, "The Mirror of Faith", itself a writing of age-long influence, the fifteen-year-old schoolboy broke forth cheerily and thoughtlessly: "Well, then it is best to mirror our faith!" Little did he reckon the significance of his words. His young heart was pierced by the truths he read in the volume. After a severe spiritual struggle he found deliverance through faith in the Saviour. During that struggle he received remarkable spiritual guidance from a Christian woman of exceptional spiritual experience. Rosenius became an ardent student of Scripture and of Luther. When he had finished his College course at Hernösand, 1837, he had already for a year preached, by permission of the Bishop of the Diocese. From the start he proclaimed with ringing power and with the gripping clearness of actual experience how worthless our own deeds and virtues are for the gaining of God's grace in Christ. Right early he witnessed the blessed fruits of such preaching. It established him the more in his life's main theme: Saved by grace through faith alone.

In 1838 he entered the University of Uppsala, with the ministry in view. From boyhood he

had meant to follow in his father's footsteps. But during his University career his health began to decline. Prayers for recovery seemed unavailing. His financial condition was straitened through the poverty of his home. In May, 1839, he left the University for a tutorship in a nobleman's family. Doubts, both doctrinal and spiritual, assailed him with intensity, as they will most experienced Christians. An English pastor, named Scott, resident at the time in Stockholm, gave him welcome spiritual counsel in his Christian life's most fearsome trial. And the day broke anew with rosy radiance! His acquaintance with Scott grew into a warm personal friendship, in the midst of which, however, he kept the credal distinctions clear. This the more unusual, considering his youth. Rosenius now preached every Saturday from New Year's, 1840. His fervent love of direct Scriptural study and preaching made him averse inwardly to the dull, deadening theological status of the Universities. So, after conferring with his home, and with friends, and after much prayer to learn the will of God, he became the assistant of Scott. Though of another creed, Scott never proselyted. Rosenius always shunned such who enticed the flock spiritually in the interest of another Confession. Rosenius was, and remained, soundly and inflexibly Lutheran. His joint labor with Scott was due to circumstances of the times and

of the city he lived in, and to the heart-breaking callousness of the Church of his land. God in His providence directed the fellowship with Scott, so that its undeniable "irregularity", as it has been called, nowise lessened Rosenius' own confessional firmness. When Scott in 1841 went on a tour to America, Rosenius preached in his church Sunday evenings, and, upon Scott's return, alternately with him. It was in the large Bethlehem church, often used even by Confessional churchmen, a sort of Mission. In January, 1842, he became joint-editor with Scott of "The Pietist", a devotional organ of immense influence through all of Scandinavia, and even in our own land. In March, the same year, a Stockholm mob assaulted the English preacher in his church. Denominational liberty was not then in force. Scott had to leave the country. The group of Christians that had gathered about him now came, fortunately, under the sole leadership of Rosenius, the strictly Lutheran Pietist. Rosenius became sole editor of "The Pietist." A free missionating and soul-quickenng activity began, grew to great proportions, and extended its influence by degrees over the whole country and to neighboring lands, Norway, Denmark, Finland, to the foreign mission fields, and, not the least, to our Lutheran population in America. By petition to the Consistory the enlarged Bethlehem church, built by Scott, became the centre of Ro-

senius' work in Stockholm from March 13, 1857. Through the Spirit-given labors of a growing number of witnesses, Sweden was gradually awakening from the era of spiritual sleep.

In spots, living voices had been raised before this time, chief of whom was that still influential preacher and catechist, Henrik Schartau of Lund, a pastor of such eminence of spirit and of intellect that he must be ranked among the greatest spiritual leaders of the Church (he died in 1825). Schartau represents the Wyrtemberg type of Pietism, with its brooding, analytical, patriarchal trend. He was a genius in catechization. The Rosenius movement represents a brighter, less severe type, complementary of the other, and like it, with limitations of its own. But it homes itself among the common people readily, and understands the sacred art of removing hindrances to faith in the heart of men in every station of life.

Soon mighty churchmen like Bishop Thoman-der of Lund, the brilliant Dean Wieselgren of Gothenburg, preachers like the learned returned missionary Fjellstedt, who spoke twelve languages, wrote four more, and read fourteen besides these, in all thirty, hymnists like the layman Ahnfelt, the Lutheran Sankey of Sweden, singer and preacher of blessed gifts and graces, and an array of noble and God-fearing souls threw their energies into the awakening movement. A host

of able and fearless men and women! The movement was, in fact, an Inner Missions movement on a big scale. Dean Wieselgren was also the silver-tongued leader in the Temperance Reform. The organizing of the "Evangelical Fatherland Foundation" in 1856, for lay-missions at home and foreign missions abroad, and its establishing of a publication house able to furnish the requisite devotional literature, gave the awakening solid aid. Rosenius deemed lay-missionating necessary, the State Church being what it was at the time. Doctrinally he never wavered. His reverence for the Church suffered no sectarianizing diminution. Luther has never had a more evangelical disciple in that far North than Rosenius, the Lutheran Pietist, without the legalism of extreme Pietism. Who, moreover, has written more tellingly and searchingly on the sanctified life in faith than he? And, without the too common speculations on the second coming of Christ, what beautiful setting forth of Christian hope we find in him!

From 1860 on, during seven years, Rosenius gave in "The Pietist" an exposition of Paul's greatest letter—to the Romans—later published in two large volumes. With deep theological insight, exceeding attention to the sense of the text, and spiritual force, Rosenius has endowed the Christian Church with an unexcelled popular exposition of the "Romans." Would that this

mighty work were found, slightly retouched, in an English rendering! It would find no rival in English. Thorough study unites here with a marvellous devotional unction. This is "intensive Bible study" after our own heart. This is discipleship with Luther's classic exposition of the "Galatians." No country possesses an ample, popular, and yet scholarly, exposition that can vie with this work of Rosenius on the "Romans." With all its noted simplicity, making it a favorite among people in general, it has nevertheless been a Bible school, and even a theological course, for thousands of pastors, theologians, and intelligent Christian laymen in all ranks of life. Rosenius has been readily comprehended by our fathers and mothers, even by scantily schooled minds. Powerful and clear spiritual experience liberates and matures the intellect itself. A Norwegian translation of Rosenius on the "Romans" is extant since decades. He has also been rendered into German.

Just a closing word on Rosenius' style.

It is winsomely warm, and Northernly placid. It is marked by a keen, incisive spiritual insight. He probes into the interior of the text with astounding patience. Such intense scanning of the inner heart and organism of the Word of God! But he also probes firmly, yet lovingly, into the human heart, which he knows so well, and which he examines and diagnoses like the true

spiritual physician that he is. Here is religious psychology (study of the soul) for the educated youth of the Church, psychology by the light of the Holy Spirit, who *does* know the soul. The work-righteousness "religious psychology" of a worldly wisdom, darkened in understanding, can, of course, not know the soul in its deep eternal relations. Try out this new Biblical psychology, and see! Here the toiler of the shop, the maid, the parent, the Christian educator, the Bible student, the man and woman of affairs will meet one who knows them to the heart-core. Rosenius converses with the soul intimately, as if he talked to its very inwards. He is uniquely conversant with your troubled soul-states. He sets the jubilations of your faith and hope into words that surprisingly reveal what your deepest heart feels. And that most trying condition of the soul—spiritual uncertainty—what a Christ-directed analyzer of the heart, so pained, is Rosenius! That is, if you care to take time, prayerfully, to know the difficulty, and the way out of it. Personally I believe that in dealing with spiritual uncertainty Rosenius has had but few equals in the history of the Church. His influence here has been powerful.

The sustained Biblical dignity of expression in his writings unites with a crystal clear simplicity and never-failing Christian fervor. Rosenius' gift, even genius, for careful thought-develop-

ment is also remarkable. There are times when he goes into the deeps that test the power of thinking. But if you read him then in your quiet chamber, when your soul is alone with God, even these passages will seem bright and plain. He is taught of God to minister to seekers as well as to finders, to the young and to the mature. May it be remembered, that it was *the youth* of his own time that found in him a spiritual guide, and grew up with him in the Word.

When we become intimately homed in his style we will discover that extremely fine and spiritually purposive shades of meaning are expressed by him in a manner that may escape the inattentive reader. Yet not mistily—for it is exactly *the Lutheran laity* that has been the ardent circle of Rosenius-readers. This exquisite attention to the varied shades of Christian experience and to the most intricate troubles of the sinner seems to find its correspondingly exquisite expression in a choice of thoughts and words spiritually true and often uncommonly beautiful. It is not a pedantic clarity of thought, but intuitional clearness, which grasps the heart of things without minute analysis that bids for the painful scrutiny of grammatical and rhetorical scholarship. Rosenius spoke and wrote for the common Christian man. How painstaking he was in his effort to lead the soul aright! So in picturing with tireless carefulness the snares, the struggles,

the dangers of the self-righteous, or the awakened, or the reclaimed, Rosenius makes sure that his words say what they ought to say to these souls. We feel off and on that we might need his effective living voice to bring out in full those beautiful touches that are deftly suggested rather than prominently expressed. Once in a while the busy writer has failed to work out clearly a sentence—he was always extremely taxed with labor. Those are slips, not characteristics. Some of the choicest spiritual intimations in Rosenius come in those easy turns of thought, telling little phrases, tiny particles of speech that make translation of Rosenius a man's job. This trait in his style of writing has its reason above all in that exceeding carefulness with which Rosenius attends to the words of Scripture. It comes also from his loving sensitiveness to the hidden troubles of the soul and to the complicated struggles of Christian faith and hope. *The Church work of Rosenius was—to save souls!*

If we have a strong interest in our own salvation we will come to learn what a wondrous gift a good devotional writer is. Rosenius' mastery in varying the expression of a spiritual reality or of a spiritual experience or of a truth of the Word makes him always fresh and informing, quickening and delightful. The spiritual intensity of his thought at times shocks the depth of

our being. So, too, the tender and amiable pleading with a despondent heart brings tears of gratitude to our eyes. He does not voice the spiritual experiences of heart and conscience in the cold terms of logic, morals, mind-life. He speaks in the terms of the heart-life. He gives the right tone-color of language as of thought when portraying the states of the soul.

His theology is ample, sound, Biblical. We can well understand why one of American Lutheranism's leading college presidents, himself pastor, lately wrote: "I have learned more theology from Rosenius than from all my other theological study." The statement comes from a strictly Confessional churchman.

But our brief estimate of Rosenius must follow his own rule: All praise and glory to *Christ alone!* We sit at the feet of Rosenius only because he is a trustworthy guide to Christ—for no other reason.

First and last, how Rosenius makes Christ stand forth gloriously, in all the radiant magnificence of His redemption on Golgotha and on Easter! The fruits in atonement and justification by faith, with "the hope of glory", abound there. He wrote once to a friend: "The blood of Christ is shed unto *the remission of sins*. Oh, it reads: 'Unto the remission of sins!' And that—that holds also for me. This is my only com-

fort in faith, and this shall be my religion:
‘Unto the remission of sins!’”

When Rosenius died February 24, 1868, from a stroke, only 52 years old, he was no longer a derided, intruding layman, but a revered and loved spiritual father to tens of thousands among the clergy and laity in many lands. At his funeral, from St. John’s Church, Stockholm, Bishop Beckman read the service, and then spoke with simple and touching force to Rev. 14. 13: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth.” With the singing of “Hallelujah” by a chorus, the impressive service revealed its tone of triumph, befitting the finish of a consecrated Christian pilgrimage through the vale of tears to the Lord of Life in heaven.

* * *

The translator has been variously urged to render into our language one of this man’s brief and choice writings: First, by my pastoral experiences, for many years; then, in my present vocation, by seeing the dire needs of young candidates for the ministry; further, as a glorious encouragement for the Bible Study movement of our land; and lastly, for my own spiritual refreshment and renewal of faith. Some statements in Rosenius might have needed slight elucidation. But, with the exception of a few cases, I have thought best to let the native man-

ner of Rosenius speak for itself in this first writing of his turned into English. Most of the frequent underscorings of the original are retained.

Christ bless the message of His servant Rosenius to the Church of America!

ADOLF HULT.

Augustana Theological Seminary,
Epiphany, 1923.

I.

The Importance of the Believer's Freedom from the Law

As a preface to the meditation we are now undertaking, we must remind the reader that since we have already in an exposition of the Ten Commandments considered what God in His holy Law requires of man, the "handling aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2.15) demands that we now also consider what God would do for them who are stricken by the Law and fearful of His word. Deviations from the straight way of the Lord occur not only to the right hand but also to the left. As surely as they go to perdition who with their evangelical confession have not the spirit of the fear of the Lord but can always readily believe the grace of God and then live freely according to the desire of the flesh and of the world; or they who in a legalistic tone company so falsely and superficially with the Law that they never become lost and despondent through it but are quite satisfied with their piety and sanctification—as surely as *these* are in an un-

happy way, just so surely will *they* also be lost who permit themselves to be “entangled again in a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5.1), lose the real child confidence and finally the last spark of faith, are torn loose from the stock, and are “withered” (John 15.6).

As stated, we have previously considered God’s holy Law, for the awakening of the secure and lighthearted and for guidance in righteousness. We have heard from God’s own mouth what is delightful and acceptable to Him and, on the contrary, what displeases and offends Him. And we can never in this life praise God enough for the light to know with full certainty what God wills, what is acceptable to Him. We have also seen the majestic earnestness of the Law of the Lord, the consuming fiery zeal with which He (in Israel) visited the transgression of His holy commandments — for with His eternal wrath and vengeance He threatens all them that despise Him, while, on the contrary, He promises infinite grace to them that love Him and keep His commandments. Aye, when the work-righteous saints only look to a pious conduct, we have witnessed in Christ’s application of the Law how the eyes of the Lord look to the *thoughts*, desires, and most secret movements *of the heart*. May we now during all the days of our life consider this!

For the commandments and threats of God are no jest, but a majestic and unchangeable earnestness. What God at any time hated, He still continually hates. What God at any time loved, He still loves to-day, as surely as God can not change. Such things ought, indeed, to awaken every man to bethink himself. But, alas, the Lord have mercy! Even Christ's own most perfect exposition of the Law could not make of the Pharisees crushed sinners, nor rouse His disciple Judas out of the charm which the devil had cast about him. He who will can always shut his heart and hide himself from the light of the truth. Such souls will also be allowed to become hardened, so that the Lord says they shall never "understand (the truth) with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13.15).

But while some take to heart nothing at all of God's dreadful threatenings, others again become by His commandments completely lost in distress of sin, powerlessness and despondency and are consumed inwardly merely because they know their sin, the ungodliness, falsehood, and hardness of heart, but do not understand that all these things will not be reckoned to them who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8.1, 3). It always happens according to the adage, "They who ought

to fear, fear not, and they who ought not to fear, fear." We must, therefore, also think of that danger which commonly is most fine and mysterious, that a soul begins to look only upon itself, loses out of sight the whole covenant of grace, sinks down into a spirit of bondage, and ends in unbelief.

We wish, therefore, by the grace of God, to treat that very important, thoughtworthy and comforting subject, but one also very unknown, misunderstood and kept in silence:

The Believer Free from the Law.

The Lord God open now our eyes! The Lord grant us the light and guidance of His Spirit!

II.

The Meaning of This Freedom

The apostle John says in his first epistle, chapter five, verse thirteen: "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." From this we see that we may have come to faith in Jesus and nevertheless not know what we have in Him, not understand the meaning and content of the grace He has prepared for His believers. An enlightened and faithful teacher has expressed himself thus: "I had for years been attached to my Saviour before I had the least idea of that glorious state, that I am simply free from the Law, that I am no more estimated and judged according to the Law, but only according to the righteousness acquired for me by my Lord, Christ. And I can say that with this light there dawned in my soul a new gracious day of the Lord, that my inward man entered, by this light, into a new, happier period of life and peace, of holy zest

and power, though to be sure it again and again becomes obscured and weakened, until the Lord afresh quickens me." · In this confession all unite who have made the experience mentioned.

And nevertheless, how strangely unknown this doctrine is, how misunderstood, and what silence on this glorious point of doctrine! It still appears to many in one sense pious souls almost like a novelty, yes, perhaps a dangerous novelty and a heresy, if we say: "There are men who do not at all come under the jurisdiction of the Law, men whom God never will judge according to His holy Law, to whom God never reckons their sins; while on the contrary others will be condemned, if they but err in a single point." Many will be astounded at such words, as being a most singular novelty. Thus in the midst of Christendom it is possible for men to be altogether ignorant of one of the most important truths of Christianity and merely because of the blind reason and fancy be enemies of the saving light itself, and still suppose that they have the brightest light.

But to prevent misunderstanding and to voice the *meaning* of the believers' freedom from the Law, we will in brief express the same in the following manner: They who have been condemned and slain by the Law, so

that they have sought and found their salvation only in the atonement of Christ, are altogether free from the Law's *condition of salvation*, or the obligation to seek their righteousness and salvation through observing the Law; and, secondly, they are also, according to their faith, free from the rule of the Law in the conscience, or what the apostle calls the "spirit of bondage . . . unto fear" (Rom. 8.15), and the "yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5.1), as well as from the agonies and sufferings connected therewith, since in their Lord and Surety they have their whole fulfilment of Law, eternal forgiveness, life and salvation. That the believers are free from the Jewish ceremonial law and police law is conceded by all, especially as that law even in the old covenant was not binding on other peoples than the Jews. But here it is a question of the moral Law, or the ten commandments. And even from this Law the believers are free, so that they no more are held to its condition of salvation, will no more be judged according as they themselves are before the Law, but according to that most perfect righteousness which they have in Christ. They live therefore, under a *constant grace*, in a *kingdom of grace*, which at all times—as long as they by faith cling to Christ—is mighty upon them. "By so much also hath

Jesus become the surety of a better covenant” (Hebr. 7.22). Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me!

This we shall now see by the words of the Holy Scripture itself. When, in Romans 7, the apostle has first set forth the example of the perfect freedom from the law of the husband, into which the woman is transferred when her husband dies, so that she may now without sin be joined to another man (v. 2, 3), he adds in v. 4: “Wherefore,—ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead.” And again, v. 6: “But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.” But if any one then asks about which law the apostle here speaks, he immediately receives enlightenment as to that in the following verse (v. 7), where the apostle expressly quotes the essence, yes, the very marrow out of the Law of the ten commandments, namely: “Thou shalt not covet,” which, we know, is the conclusion of the moral Law, the last of the ten commandments. There I see, then, about which Law the apostle speaks. It is also from the moral Law, or the ten commandments, alone that

we learn to “know sin” (v. 7), become “slain” (v. 11) and “exceeding sinful” (v. 13), etc., as the apostle says of the Law in this chapter. For from the ceremonial law the Jews received, on the contrary, their comfort and glorying, because it could be fulfilled. Accordingly it is of this moral Law the apostle says that the believers are “freed (Am. Rev. V. ‘discharged’) from the Law.” But alone in that manner which he himself explains, namely, that we are free from its “*curse*” (Gal. 3.13) and from its “*yoke of bondage*” (5.1). Therefore he also expresses the contrary of “being under the law” by “being under grace,” when in Rom. 6.14 he says: “For ye are not under law, but under grace.” When these two conditions, to *be under Law* and to *be under grace*, stand as opposites of one another, then I see what is meant by the freedom from the Law. Only as a *rule* and a *light* in regard to what is sin or holiness do the commandments of the moral Law retain their eternal importance and power even for the believers, as a loving guidance for their willing spirit and as chastisement of their evil flesh. For, as was said before, what God at any time loved, that He always loves, and what God at any time hated, that He always hates, as sure as His holy being can not be changed. Therefore we see that

the same apostle Paul, who most speaks of our freedom from the Law, nevertheless, when he admonishes the Christians, sets before them the commandments of the Law as a rule, for example, when he says: "Only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another, For"—mark this addition—"the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'" (Gal. 5.14). There we see that he presents the commandments of the Law as the rule. And John says: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5.3). But if the believers nevertheless through the weakness of the flesh err, and the conscience then condemns and terrifies them with the threat of the Law and curses, then says the apostle: Not so, nay, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.—Stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage (Gal. 3.13; 5.1).

Consequently the believers live under such a condition that they, to be sure, have an unchangeable rule in the commandments of the Law, but that they never shall be condemned for the greater or lesser failings in the observation of this rule. They shall, to be sure, be chastened, corrected, cleansed,

and broken for their sins, first by the Law, then by “rod and torments”, “wherever necessary”, but never be *judged* according to the Law; for should they be judged according to the Law, then they would be *condemned*, because the judgment of the Law is a curse upon the least sin,—the judgment reads thus: “Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Gal. 3.10). Therefore we also see how Christ, to be sure, reproveth and corrected His believing disciples for their sins, but never excluded them from grace, rather in the midst of His reproveth spoke of their seats of honor in heaven (Luke 22.-24-30). Thus John, too, says in First Epistle, 2 Chapter: “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”.

So this can explain to us the perfect freedom from the Law. And if any one still finds it difficult to believe and comprehend the very truth of the matter, we only remind him that he who does not believe this great truth, has not yet the right conception of the forgiveness of sins; for it is only because of a singular darkness of our soul that we do not consider that the *forgiveness of sins implies freedom from the Law*. For how can sin be forgiven,

if we shall be judged according to the Law? *A state of grace, a constant forgiveness* must naturally imply that we are not under the judgment of the Law; for, as previously has been said at some time, if I in the morning would have all my sins forgiven and the whole merit of Christ reckoned to me, but I should afterwards be judged according to the Law, then all my joy would be at an end before evening, all the grace which was given me would profit me nothing, no, not even an hour. For I am, indeed, at no moment so free from sin that the Law does not reprove and condemn me, if I am to be judged by the Law. Of what use were then my pardon? What would then become of the everlasting song to the praise of the Lamb? Nay, says the apostle: "I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought" (Gal. 2.21). "He that hath the Son hath the life" (I John 5.12), he "cometh not into judgment" (John 5.24), he shall not be judged according to the Law. This is our *perfect* freedom from the Law.

But this freedom from the Law also includes that my conscience through faith is set free from the Law's yoke of bondage and that I have received "not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but—the spirit of adop-

tion, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8.15). But this freedom of conscience is *an imperfect freedom*, for it is dependent on my faith, and my faith is never perfect. In the heart of God there is an eternal satisfaction with the merit of the Son alone, an eternal grace, an eternal good pleasure in what the only begotten Son has done; but in my heart there is a continual variation and strife between faith and unbelief, a continual alternating of light and darkness. In heaven there is an everlasting song of praise to the victory of the Lamb, but here below on earth only brief moments of increased light, joy, and songs of praise. In God's great book my account is forever balanced, but my little pass-book, my conscience, seldom corresponds with God's account, for we have an enemy who continually makes new entries of debt against us in order to disturb and terrify us. But praised be God, that the covenant of grace is in *His* heart perfect, firm, and undisturbed; that *He* does not count our sins against us; and that *He* does not judge us according to the Law, although we ourselves do so.

III.

Who Enjoy This Freedom?

We have now in brief indicated the nature of the believers' freedom from the Law; we have at the same time also cited some Scripture passages which confirm the fact itself, and we shall soon cite others. But before we further develop the subject itself, the freedom from the Law, we will first somewhat more closely consider the *persons* who enjoy this precious privilege. It does not belong to any and every one. The Scriptures speak expressly concerning those to whom "the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt" (Rom. 4.4), who receive merely what they have earned (Matt. 20.14), who "are under the law" (Rom. 3.19) and therefore also "are under a curse" (Gal. 3.10). May no one deceive himself and appropriate what does not belong to him. May each one earnestly give heed to the very words of Scripture.

The apostle says expressly in Gal. 2.19: "I through the law died unto the law." Such words contain the secret of our question.

He said the same in Rom. 7.4: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law"; and again, v. 6: "having died to that wherein we were held."

Mark the words "made dead" and "died". And in the same chapter the apostle shows how it takes place and what it means to be made dead unto the Law through the Law. He says: "I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet: but sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting: for apart from the law sin is dead. And I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.—For sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me" (Rom. 7.7-9,11). What do such words signify? I died, through the law." Sin "slew me through it?" If you go to the bottom of the question, you will find a precious light. Which death does the apostle mean when he in this connection says: "and I died?"—"died through the law". The catechism tells of three kinds of death: bodily, spiritual, and eternal; but here yet a fourth death is spoken of: for the apostle was, indeed, spiritually dead even before the commandment came. What does he then here

mean by the word "dead"? The experienced know it; others do not believe it. Ah, that is what happens when the Law strikes home, when the holy eyes of God begin to pursue man's thoughts and the intents of the heart—then is man made dead. And the more earnestly he is attacked the sooner will he be made dead. It was the old Pharisee Saul who was made dead before there could be a Paul. The sinew of Jacob's thigh had to be strained in a wrestling one night with the Unknown One, before he could say: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32.30); and then he received a new name. After that he never walked erect. Briefly, take the apostle's words as they read, and you will notice who is made dead. He says: "*I* was made dead." It was his *I*, his self-active, self-righteous, self-holy *I* that fell in the battle with sin under the law. The Law egged on the strife by incessant urging, by demands and remarks; and the deep-seated confidence in our own strength, which constitutes the soul of the old man, gave support to a sinewy hope of success in the strife. But all contributed the more to exhaust and slay him. He expresses all of this thus: Sin "through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me." Now it is broken—the old notion of our own

power, and of the Law's ability to make man pious and holy; and then man lies there lost, helpless, impotent, yes, "dead". But when now "the body of Christ", which was given for the forgiveness of sins, is presented through the gospel to the despairing one—when God's eternal counsel of atonement, Christ in His active and suffering merit, is explained to the exhausted soul, which now despairs of all its own work, both of its will, and ability, its prayer, its penitence, yes, all that is in it;

"It draweth near, a cripple, lame,
To Him whose love can mercy render.
Unworthy of His grace, so tender,
It would sink down for very shame."

Then it sinks into the bosom of the Bridegroom, the second husband, that it shall "be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead" (Rom. 7.4). And lo! then the soul all at once receives the whole fulfilment of the Law in Him who was "the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10.4). And now the bride lives only upon His righteousness and upon His provision for everything, and says:

"I sat down under his shadow with great delight—And his banner over me was love" (Song of Sol. 2.3, 4).

Lo, such a soul is now freed from the Law, as the apostle expressly declares: "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Gal. 3.25). Indeed, the old notion of our own strength will still grow forth a thousand times, commonly under the more subtle form, that through prayer and the power of God I can, and ought to do so much and so much—and it betrays itself as a notion of Adam by this, that I, I, I, not Christ, become the centre of all my thoughts. But then, indeed, I again become exhausted, and am made dead until I again must sink down at the feet of my Saviour and let Him become my all. And as long as this condition continues—that I am constantly and anew led back to Christ—I am, however, not under the Law, but under grace.

From this you can also understand who are *not* under grace, but under Law, namely they who have not been made dead through the Law, as we have now seen, but still retain their hope, their confidence in the Law, in their labor, their prayer, and have not become so lost and despairing of their labor that they must needs surrender—surrender as lost, to sue for mercy,—but they still by *purpose* and *intention* strive for victory

through their own labor. If during this they be rather despondent as to themselves, they may be quite nigh to the Kingdom of God. It is only necessary that they mistrust their own efforts, and then for a moment catch a glimpse of Jesus "white and ruddy" (Song of Sol. 5.10)—that is, that in a blessed hour He is transfigured before them. But if with this labor there still follows much comfort and self-satisfaction, and their faith and confession of Christ is merely a part of their own righteousness, and if their faith is not the actual refuge of a distressed and lost sinner, but a new, more beautiful piece of cloth on the old garment, then they are farther from the true grace. These can make a rather proper confession, but they simply lack the reality, which can be proved by various signs of the inner state, and this they certainly ought to take into serious consideration, if so be that they yet can be awakened. These signs are especially the following: First, *they do not recognize what the apostle says concerning the true effect of the Law*, that he became "exceeding sinful through the commandment," that he "was made dead"; for, on the contrary, they deem that they have become quite good and pious. Therefore, too, their song is not the Lamb that was slain, but their own piety, their own holiness, or how

they ought to be and how they ought to live, in brief, something about themselves. This shows that they have not been put to shame in this and have not found their only glorying in Christ.

The second sign is that they cannot comprehend that we must be *freed from the Law, in order to be saved and holy*. At least they can not understand what the apostle means when he says: "For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2.19); and again: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law—that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7.4). Mark, that one should not be able to "live unto God" without being made dead unto the Law, this is to them something so foolish and strange that, if it had not been an apostle's word, they would have proclaimed it as the worst heresy in the world. It must be just the opposite, they think, that if we are to bring forth fruit unto God, the conscience must be well bound by the Law; and that if the consciences of men are loosed from the Law, this must be an opening of the widest portals to all ungodliness. This is the sign, which betrays even those who otherwise very closely resemble the Christians. We ask: Is not this the most universal experience, asserting itself

throughout all mankind, that *every man is inclined to judge everything according to his own experience?* When a man, then, is of such a mind as to regard a free evangelical preaching, for example on the Christian's freedom from the Law, as harmful—does not this prove that he himself has this experience: that it is only the Law, and its threats, which keep him from sin? But this again proves, of course, that he himself is still ruled only by the Law, that *he* is not “made dead to the law,” that he has not yet lived to make the blessed experience that the more free grace quickens the heart, the more the desire increases for that which is holy and good. For if he himself has this experience, he will of course, be inclined to think that the same gospel, which so mightily enlivens him for the good, will also have the same effect on others. For every man, to be sure, is inclined to judge all matters according to his own experience.

A third sign is this that they never know any difference between a *pious man* and a *Christian*. If some one only loves the Word of God, is “devout” and God-fearing (Acts 10.2), and leads a proper life, they immediately consider him a Christian. They do not question whether he is pious by natural, or legalistic, motive, or whether he also was

made dead unto the Law and lives by Christ. Further, they well understand the danger that souls are frivolous and receive the grace of God in vain (II Cor. 6.1). But that any one is kept pious merely through legalistic preaching, through warnings and admonishings, and consequently lacks that which is distinctive of a Christian—that the love of Christ constrains him, and he, as Paul says, “lives unto God” just because he is freed from the Law—mark, that a soul lacks this essential of a Christian, and lives piously merely from a legalistic motive—as to this danger they are never concerned. When all experience testifies what the apostle also expressly says that all men, even the heathen, have the Law written in their heart, and its demands accordingly cannot constitute any great mystery; when, on the contrary, a piety of legalistic motive is so subtle a fraud “as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24.24), so that even Christ declared that on the Day of Judgment He will cast into the outer darkness members of the marriage-feast of His kingdom, who have prophesied by His name, cast out demons, and done many mighty works (Matt. 22.11; 7.22),—then there certainly are reasons for fearing this most mysterious evil just as much as that which all men can understand, namely, sins against the Law. But when a man is unable

to consider this, but always looks only for Law and deeds, that certainly proves that he has not experienced—and therefore does not know—the difference between *a pious man* and *a Christian*. But this difference one learns to understand well when one *through the Law is made dead unto the Law*. Thus this sign, too, proves that a man is not freed from the Law.

IV.

Why Freedom from the Law Is Necessary

Having now seen the most essential difference between those who are under the Law and those who are under grace, we will also examine *why it is so necessary to be freed from the Law*. Freedom from the Law is altogether necessary. For without it no flesh can be justified in the sight of God or abide in His grace; neither can the soul which is awake retain the confidence of faith. The reason is that our whole nature is by the Fall so utterly ruined, so filled with sin and the seed of the serpent that there has never on earth existed, nor does there now exist, any saint that is not every hour guilty before the holy Law of God. To them who sleep and dream in their piety, this is a hard and foolish saying. But faithful and watchful souls feel it so deeply and bitterly that even having all the gospel of God they are often ready to despair entirely or to grow weary or to faint by the way. Either we shall be so completely

saved by grace alone that God never reckons with us, never thinks of His claims, or we are eternally lost. So constantly filled with sin is our whole life. In the degree that the spirit is willing, holy, and awake, in that same degree we feel the corruption powerfully and urgently. The knowledge of sin depends only on how much God means to a man. If he has a real, true and holy God to face, then he may be consumed, as the example of all saints proves. Or is there a single Christian so holy and earnest, that he fulfills for one single hour the demands of the first and chief commandment? We ask them who are most earnest and have most of the Spirit of God, and of power. But what is all piety, if you do not keep the first and chief commandment? That commandment demands that you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind (Mark 12.30); and further, that you so completely trust in Him alone and fear Him alone as His Divine faithfulness and power deserve. Is it not true that if you so love God of all your heart and trust in Him alone, that God alone is the sole object of your *love*, your *trust*, and *fear*, then your soul must be in an eternal tranquillity, in the undisturbed enjoyment of this sole good which you desire—the im-

mortal God (I Tim. 1.17)? Then you must believe that not a hair shall fall from your head without the will of your Father, that not the least thing can happen to you, not a word, not a look wound you, without the will of your Father. When you then love nothing but Him and His good pleasure, it must needs follow that you are at all times calm and happy, whatever may betide you, just because you know that all comes from your God, and that you love nothing else but His good pleasure. Where is that holy man who keeps this commandment? We wish to speak now with such a one. Are you just as calm and happy as before if some one deprives you of the dearest thing you have on earth?—just as calm and happy, if some one takes from you all your property, and you are brought to poverty and want?—just as calm and happy, if some one deprives you of your good name and reputation, if you become disgraced, despised and abhorred of all men for the rest of your life?—just as calm and happy, if a severe illness, yes, if a murderer shortens your life? If it is true that you love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all the powers which are in you, and, trusting Him alone, believe that nothing happens to you without His will, then you must necessarily be perfectly calm and happy amid all

these happenings. But perhaps it is far otherwise, perhaps, on the contrary, you become troubled by a rather trifling loss, perhaps if you but learn that men have spoken ill of you or exposed some weakness of yours this disturbs your calm for hours and days at a time. Yes, perhaps even a disdainful look troubles you. How do you, then, love God alone and His good pleasure? Do you feel that you right fervently love your God, so that your thoughts are continually with Him? Perhaps, on the contrary, you more ardently love and think of some human being? But further: Is it not true that we, who are redeemed with the blood of the Son of God from all our sins, from death and the power of the devil, should not have any higher purpose in life than to glorify Him who died and rose for us? Is this at all times actually your endeavor? Is it not true that if you love God with all your heart, you should never feel so delighted with anything as with your God, in prayer and intimate conversation with Him? Will you say that you constantly wish to commune with Him in prayer? Perhaps, far from being so, you prefer to attend to the various duties of your home rather than to commune with God in prayer? Alas! what is then your relation to the first and chief commandment?

Then you should also *love your neighbor as yourself*. Always think seriously of the chief commandments of the Lord your God. What is all piety, if we do not above all keep the most important commandments? Is it actually true that you are just as careful about your neighbor's welfare as about your own? Consider that the word "neighbor" means not merely some friend or other, but all men, friends or foes. Are you just as concerned about every man's gain as about your own? just as sensitive to a disparaging word about your neighbor as when you hear that they speak ill of *you*? Further, you believe that every one that dies unconverted will be eternally damned. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will work for every man's conversion with as much diligence and eagerness as if it were a question of your own salvation or condemnation. You take pains with a few, but perhaps you daily see many unconverted souls for whose awakening you have not the slightest concern. What, then, of your love for your neighbor? And how about the observance of all the other commandments? Is it not true that at the slightest occasion many unholy things within your heart are stirred, which the Lord God hates and condemns—either anger, envy, hate, or pride and conceit, or unclean lusts, or de-

sire for the property of others, and so forth? And as yet we are speaking of the believers of Christ, who are watchful and realize their sin. There are none who so lament their sins as the saints. What would then happen, if God should judge us according to His Law? Must not the saints pray: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living is righteous?" (Ps. 143.2). Thus Scripture testifies: "Behold, He putteth no trust in his holy ones" (Job 15.15). "What is man, that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman, that *he* should be righteous?—Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight: how much less one that is abominable and corrupt, a man that drinketh iniquity like water" (Job 15.14-16). And again Scripture says: "There is none righteous, no, *not one*. —They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one" (Rom. 3.10, 12). Every saint needs daily forgiveness of sins. How, then, would we fare, if we still had to be judged according to the Law?

V.

Freedom and Remaining in Grace

It is quite important to know well by the Word and to believe the deep fall of man and the total depravity of human nature everywhere, even in its remnants among the saints, not only in order that we may carefully value, take to heart, and extol the inexpressible grace, that we are freed from the judgments of the Law, but also in order that the conscience may be *able to abide* in this freedom. For if we are not by the Word well informed of this corruption, we shall, with all our knowledge of the merit of Christ, yet be completely buried in misery and despair, as soon as we have come to a real experience of it in ourselves. If I, who believe in Christ, find in myself a miserable sinfulness which I deem to be found only in unbelievers and never in the children of God, then all the merit of Christ will not help me; for then I am told: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God (Acts 8.21). Therefore we need

to consider this matter somewhat more closely.

We saw the testimony of Scripture that *even among God's saints there is none blameless*, that there exists none righteous (in his own person), *no, not one*. But then a simple-hearted believing soul who is commonly assailed by all contradictions of his own heart and of Satan will be likely to think: "Yes, to be sure no one is blameless, no one is righteous in the eyes of God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean (Job 15), the eyes of *God*, which see that which is as nothing. But surely the true saints cannot have and feel actual sin in their hearts, for example, sinful lusts and desires, indifference and mistrust of God, proud thoughts, and the like; for *sanctification*, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the very name *saints* must have some meaning. When I now feel in me that which is actual sin, and when it even breaks out in words and deeds, I can not possibly have any part or lot in Christ and His merit." And in this way it happens—merely through a misconception of the holiness of the saints and through ignorance of man's universal corruption—that they who really feel their sin walk none the less, in spite of all the gospel they hear, in a secret self-condemnation and lack the faith and assurance which

would give them love, life, zest, and power unto good; and only they comfort themselves who are enough asleep not to notice in themselves any sin. It is because of this thought-confusion that it becomes necessary for us to consider those passages in Scripture which show us by living examples what is meant when we read: "He putteth no trust in his holy ones" (Job 15.15).

To be sure it is true that sanctification and the work of the Holy Spirit also have importance. They who have such a faith as works no sanctification are not true Christians. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8.9). But your misconception is due to this that you do not consider that there are in the saints two natures, the *old* and the *new* man, the *flesh* and the *spirit*. That within us which is born after the Spirit is spirit, but that which is born after the flesh is flesh and retains its Adamitic character as long as any of it remains, that is, as long as we live here on earth. The Spirit and the new mind, which is born of God—this is in truth holy among all the children of God. Listen to their unspeakable sighs, at the sense of anything sinful; hear them in their private, quiet prayer; see their tears before their God over their sins against Him; and you will surely understand that

flesh and blood cannot work such things, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in them. See their amazement merely at a conceited thought; behold their wailing and lamenting when a strong temptation besets and stubbornly pursues them; mark how they sweat, writhe, are in anguish, yes, groan by reason of the disquietness of their heart; and you will understand that it surely is a holy spirit which suffers so from the unholy. View their joy when they have been delivered from a severe and persistent temptation; see their joy when they have received grace to be more spiritual and holy in heart, thoughts, and manner of life. View, then, the all-conquering power, which is mighty in all their weakness, for example when a child turned to God can go with a bleeding heart away from the parental home rather than deny its Saviour; when a person who is most sensitive to the opinion of the world can forsake the whole world and for the rest of his life became a fool for Christ's sake; when a Christian wife, to be well-pleasing to God, can patiently and humbly endure the tyranny of a godless husband through all the years of her life, and so forth. But we say again: Note the *mind*, the *spirit*; for all externals can deceive. Note the Psalms of David, where you may look right into his heart, see his spirit, and see,

if he is not holy. Look at the tears of Peter, whether *he* was the man to deny his Master. And Paul! Indeed, he was five times scourged, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, and so forth (II Cor. 11), and at all these experiences he was never heard impatiently to wish for deliverance. But once this lamentation breaks forth from his heart: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7.24) and that was when he spoke of the "law of sin which is in my members,—warring against the law of my mind" (7.23). Lo, such things testify that the Holy Spirit dwells within the saints.

But were they therefore free from sin, did they therefore not have the old Adamitic corruption still in their flesh? What does the holy apostle say?* "They that are of Christ Jesus crucify (Am. Rev. Vers., have crucified) the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Gal. 5.24). Mark, he says that "they that are of Christ" still have remaining such "passions and lusts" as must be crucified. He speaks there, indeed, of the true saints, not of them who are under the Law, but of them "that are of Christ," and nevertheless

*Rosenius uses here an older Version. Yet the truth he develops is evident from passages like Col. 3.5.

he says that they have evil "passions and lusts." But they crucify them—the Holy Spirit who dwells in them does that. If you ever have felt what evil "passions and lusts" signify, we ask: Are not even these sin? Are not just these passions and lusts the most hateful sins, which compel you to say to yourself: "Woe to me, wretch! I have sin in the heart itself, I *love* sin!" For so we come to know passions and lusts, namely as a love for sin. According to the new, holy spirit I hate and condemn these passions, this love of the flesh for sin, but I must, however, feel it within me. But imagine now a true saint, who "is of Christ Jesus." Can you think of such a one as having evil passions and lusts? No, that is impossible, you think. But here you see that the apostle says quite otherwise.

It is this condition which explains why the same man who obtained the beautiful testimony that he was a man after the heart of God (I Sam. 13.14) could yield so terribly to evil passions and lusts that if the grace of God had not sought and saved him he would have been eternally lost (II Sam. 12). Of another man we have God's own testimony that "there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil" (Job 1.8);

but when the temptation became all too strong this man fell into such sore impatience that with many dreadful words he cursed the day wherein he was born and the tenderness with which he was nursed (Job 3). He whom *God himself* calls "perfect and upright" and God-fearing must, of course, truly be so, but he was not on that account free from the weakness of the flesh. Abraham, who is called the father of the faithful and with whom God spoke as a friend unto a friend, certainly was a greater saint than any one of us; but he could not so perfectly love God alone and trust only in Him that he was not also careful about his own life, and himself sought to save it when he said of his wife that she was his sister (Gen. Chapters 12 and 20).

What are we, then, to learn of such examples? By no means that every one is a Christian who has sin in common with the saints. For only *he* is a Christian who in penitence and faith is like the saints. And as a foundation for our faith and pardon something quite different from the frailties of the saints is required; as a comfort against the guilt of sin and judgment nothing less than the precious merit of Christ is of any avail. Still less are we to infer that sin is not dangerous, since it is found even in the saints; no, this is a comfort which the false spirits, indeed,

take, who misuse all the Word of God unto their own destruction (II Pet. 3.16). And yet *all* the Word of God must be considered. But the believers have a spirit which, even in spite of the fall of the saints, all the more warns them against unwatchfulness, security, and haughtiness to which every fall is due. And it was *this* which the Holy Spirit wished to teach us, when He caused the sins of the saints to be recorded and when he said that “every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable” (II Tim. 3.16)—this, namely, that we are never to believe that any man walking this earth is free from the seed of the serpent, from sins and failings. From this we are to learn humility and the fear of God and to put all our trust in God’s grace alone, we are also to learn not to allow ourselves to be deprived of our comfort in Christ because of our besetting infirmities as long as we are conscious that it is because of them that we dwell at the mercy-seat.

It is not without reason that we employ so many words to show that among the saints of God no one is blameless. It is a fearful solicitation of the devil with which we have to contend. The devil knows so well how to capture souls. Just as he led Christ from the scantiness of the wilderness, where He “was with the wild beasts” (Mark 1.13), up to the

pinnacles of the temple in the holy city, so, too, he would always lead souls spiritually. When we can no longer be kept sleeping with the world in the uncleanness of sin, he faces about and would lead us to such dreams of holiness as are yet more distant from the kingdom of God than the greatest uncleanness of sin (Matt. 21.31). It has happened to many a Christian that before he was aware he had been led on so far into this deceit of Satan as to consider himself altogether sinless. And when he is reminded that not even the aforementioned saints of the Scriptures were sinless, he answers: "Yes, in the Old Testament the Spirit was not yet given; but look at the apostles after Pentecost"—and then he imagines he is, or will be, like these. How can such a one need *daily forgiveness*? How can he value Christ's everlasting priesthood and defence, value our freedom from the Law?—If it please God to bless a word to such a soul, we wish still to speak somewhat of this.

When John says, that "the Spirit was not yet given" (John 7.39), he has in mind only those wonderful powers of Spirit which were poured out on the apostles after the resurrection of Christ and the great day of Pentecost; but that the saints in the Old Testament had the Spirit of God, as well as those of the New,

the Scriptures certainly everywhere testify. It is precisely of the Old Testament saints the apostle Peter says: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1.21). And you say: "Look at the apostles at Pentecost," and mean that we should be like them. Yes, if God wished to work a like miracle in us, it surely would be an easy thing for Him and for us a heavenly joy; but it can happen only as a miracle wrought in us by God. For the apostles could not of themselves take unto themselves even the least power; but received all their glorious powers through a miracle from heaven. And so it must always come about. But the apostle gives us a wholesome warning, which reads: "For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith" (Rom. 12.3). Do you understand this word: "According as God hath *dealt* to each man a *measure* of faith?" Where there is found but the frailest spirit, born of the Spirit, it always hungers, sighs, craves, and begs for more than it receives of faith, love, and all the powers of grace; for here on earth we

shall never be fully satisfied with our portion. And as long as such a hungering, beseeching spirit is found in my heart, it likely afterwards depends on God's imparting, how great a measure of faith and of powers of grace I have.

But is it not a fearsome conceit to imagine that you can attain to the same measure of holiness as the apostles? Remind yourself of the description of that which God did with them. When the Holy Spirit's tongues of fire, with a sound from heaven as of the rushing of a mighty wind, had sat down upon each one of them, they were so filled with the Holy Spirit that they thereby alone could immediately speak with other tongues (Acts 2.4); that Peter could now raise up the dead (9.39-41), and merely by a word heal the sick (3.6; 9.34); yes, if only his shadow fell on the sick they became whole (5.15). What had now happened to the apostles? They had received the apostolic equipment; they had before been but as other friends and disciples of Jesus, with many imperfections and failings, both in understanding and power. But now they were quite different men; now they were furnished with such a measure of the Spirit that everything which they spoke and wrote must be "accepted not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, *the word of God*'

(I Th. 2.13), so that no other human being's speech or writing after the time of the apostles dare be compared with theirs. This every one knows. But why can no other holy man's word be compared with that of the apostles? Simply for this reason that no one has received the same outpouring of the Spirit upon himself as they; for who can now, simply through the Spirit, speak with other tongues? Who has now the shadow (Acts 5.15) which heals the sick? Who raises now the dead? But if the apostles had such a measure of Spirit that the speech or writing of no one can compare with theirs, neither may any one's holiness in heart, thoughts, and walk be compared with theirs. For the same measure of Spirit which led their tongue and pen must, of course, first lead their thought and heart; and thereupon, naturally, the walk always follows. Therefore it is certainly a blind conceit to compare oneself with the holy apostles.

Consider now how strangely instructive it is that although the apostles had received such an incomparable measure of the Spirit's power and were more holy than any one else, they were, nevertheless, not entirely delivered from sinful corruption. We do not wish to determine how much of sin there lay in the "contention" between Paul and Barnabas

(Acts 15.39), or in the “dissimulation” of Peter because of which Paul “resisted him to the face,” according to Galatians 2.11-14. But one event is very remarkable—that of which Paul speaks in II Cor. 12.1-10. First he relates his glorious experience, how that he “was caught up even to the third heaven,” concerning which he twice remarks, “whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth.” Then he adds that he “was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Is it not strange that there is now to follow (verse 7) such a confession as this: “And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, *that I should not be exalted overmuch.*” Oh, this passage shows me how the saints are! I, indeed, should think that after such a glorious experience, which he calls to be “caught up even to the third heaven,” and “into Paradise,” the holy apostle would not be subject to anything so abhorrent as the inclination to “*be exalted overmuch.*” When he had just come from such a holy world, such a pure air, if we may say so, and, besides, had himself done nothing splendid, but had only experienced marvellous grace from God, we

should think that such a holy man could not even be tempted to exalt himself overmuch. But we read in the text his own confession: "That I should not be exalted overmuch." Ah, such are the saints! May no one, then, imagine himself to be more holy than the apostles. Learn from this never to believe those who imagine that there can be such a holiness on earth that sin—black, unholy sin—no longer dwells in them. To believe any such thing of a human being on earth, says Luther, "is a thought as contrary to the nature of the case, as strange and erroneous as it would be furiously thought and spoken, if any one said that our Lord God had fallen into sin." No, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.—He putteth no trust in his holy ones" (I John 1.8; Job 15.15).

Before the Fall man was pure and sinless. Then he had a free will, then he could keep the Law of God perfectly and thereby in his own person please God; for the entire nature of the first man was a living Law, which in all parts corresponded with the holy being of God—man was created *in His image*—and in such a condition he could fulfill all the demands of God. But after the Fall this entire nature and ability are lost. God's image was destroyed, and in its place the serpent

implanted *his* image, his poison, his evil nature in man. From this comes the circumstance, corroborated by the whole Scripture and all experience, that the more the light and power of the Spirit dwells in a man, the more he feels the severe struggle between the Spirit and the flesh. But this struggle itself is condemnable before the Law of God which demands purity and holiness in our *whole* being. This inner evil itself, these sinful thoughts, feelings and desires are in the eyes of God a sinful state, which is forbidden and condemned in His whole Law. This is the reason why no saint can possess His grace a single day, if he is to be judged by the Law. And with this we have, then, shown the first reason why it is altogether necessary that we must be freed from the Law, if we are to be saved. For the most upright Christians, in whom the love and fear of God dwell most powerfully, are nevertheless as to their flesh constantly unclean and will at certain times feel this corruption so mightily that they are near to complete despair. They feel an indifference toward God, an unbelief, security, and hardness, which are fearful; no life in their prayer, no taste for the Word and no power from it, no holy zeal for the glory of God, neither any universal love of the neighbor—nothing but deadness and impo-

tence in everything. Then, too, there stir within their hearts many unworthy things, such as impatience, wrath, envy, impure desires, selfishness, pride, and so forth. How could they with all this misery of sin be God's beloved children and heirs, if they were to be tested and judged according to the Law? And how would they be able to have a true peace of heart before their God and certainty as to His good pleasure and friendship, if they had the conviction that He would judge them according to His Law? See, then, how very necessary it is to be freed from the Law, if we are to be saved—and if we are to have peace with God in our hearts!

VI.

Freedom and True Holiness

But the freedom of the conscience from the Law is also necessary for true *sanctification*, and that we might be *able to do deeds truly good and pleasing to God*. Oh, that God would open the hearts of many to this truth, which is such foolishness to the blind reason! The apostle says expressly: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law . . . that ye might bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7.4). And again: "But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (v. 6). And in the same way the apostle speaks in Gal. 2.19: "For I through the law died unto the law, *that I might live unto God.*" Note, however, that the apostle hereby expressly declares that we cannot live unto God, cannot bring forth fruit unto God, unless we first are dead unto the Law. Consider here but two circumstances. First that which is taught by

experience: As long as a soul is not delivered from the spirit of thralldom, but labors at his piety with his eye on himself and on the Law and looks upon God as One who demands something of him, then all is dead, heavy, and listless in the heart, and with all resolutions there comes no power, no accomplishment, nothing but thoughts and words and a few outward observances, which are not too difficult for the natural self. Further, if the Law also attacks the heart and the inner corruption, this becomes doubly stirred up and irritated as the apostle says: "When the commandment came, sin revived," and "wrought in me . . . all manner of coveting," and so forth (Rom. 7.7-11). Oh, how many anguished bondservants sigh under this experience and cannot comprehend where the mistake lies! They hear and read the Word of God, they cry out and pray, they go to the Lord's Supper, and all is in vain, all is death and powerlessness; only sin is alive and mighty. Oh, that they would hear! Oh, that they would bow their ears to the wisdom of God! Then would their peace be as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea (Is. 48.18); then would they know a new heavenly desire and power in their hearts.

What you lack is this: You were never truly delivered from the yoke of bondage, you

never truly tasted what the true faith means, never became truly blessed in pure unmerited grace. Oh, that you would receive that light which one brother cannot give to the other but which is a *revelation of God* in the soul, a heavenly gift, which so sets forth Jesus that you would see the unspeakable grace in which the Heavenly Father, for whose commandments you are slaving, has had such mercy upon us, as to deliver up His Son to fulfill for us all that the Law can demand of us. Then you would see that *for you, too, He has already fulfilled all that which you are working at*, and that God has no other purpose with His Law than to exhaust and slay your self-righteousness, because He never has thought that you would be able to do anything but sin (Rom. 3.12, 19). And you would also see that God through the propitiation for our sins is merciful to all your iniquities, loves you just as you are, and has Himself taken away all your sins and inscribed your name in heaven, just as you are, all for the sake of Christ, your Brother and Mediator!

If you saw all this in the light of the Spirit, and saw how the heavenly Father never counts on you, but has His satisfaction in His beloved Son, for whose sake He never, never looks upon your sins; yes, if you saw, how in

the midst of your deepest despondency because of sin you are beautiful and lovely in the eyes of God, through Christ, just as you are—if you saw this in the light of the Spirit, verily, you would weep for love, and leap for joy, and everything which hitherto has been altogether too difficult and impossible for you would become light and pleasant. What was it that caused the martyrs to go joyfully to the stake, Vincentius, his body in torments, to call the glowing coals roses, frail women to say that they had never gone with such joy to their dances as now to the stake? Nothing else than that they were filled with the unspeakably great grace that the Son of God was their Brother and that they through Him were friends of God and the desire of His eyes. This is what Scripture expressly says: “The joy of Jehovah is your strength” (Neh. 8.10); and again: “I will run the way of thy Commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Ps. 119.32).

This is the first point as to the condition, or state, of the believer, telling us that we must be freed from the Law to be able to bring forth fruits unto God. The second point is, that even if you could do much more good than all believers, not a single one of your deeds is pleasing to God as long as they do not spring from this evangelical faith

and love. As long as the Law rules in the conscience, it spoils everything you do. You, perhaps, do exactly the same deeds as the believing and delivered soul; but there is an ugly black stain on your deeds which makes them even repulsive in the eyes of God. This black stain consists in this one thing that you do the good *for the sake of the Law* and not of the heart's own free desire and love, that you do the good because of commandments, threats and promises and not of an inward urge, of free inclination and desire—just as it puts an ugly black stain upon a child's kindness to its mother, if the child was forced to it by the rod of its father or was prevailed upon by an enticing promise while of course the child ought to have shown this kindness from its own heart's feeling for its mother. Now it is evident from all the Word of God that the Lord God will not have any forced services. What He desires is the heart, its love and devotion.

A married man who really loves his wife is not satisfied with the mere services he receives from her. He would first of all have her love. And if he discovers that for the sake of his property she only feigns love for him, but in reality does not love him, then all her kindness will only be an abomination to him, and simply kindle his wrath. So with

God. Before His eyes all that piety and godliness is repugnant and rejected which is practised only because we "*shall,*" we "*ought,*" we "*must,*" that is, practised only from a *legalistic motive*, and which does not flow forth from a liberated, blessed, and grateful spirit, from the love of the bride which says: Now I do not so much as pick up a straw in order to merit salvation and the friendship of God, or to atone for my guilt; for my Bridegroom of blood has done all this during the thirty years that He was a bondservant under the Law for me, and finally suffered the bloody death of the Cross. But what little I do, I do because I do not need to do anything for my pardon; only because He has done all for me, and is every day and every moment my only righteousness before God; only because I now am in such a kingdom of grace that all my sins shall never be reckoned against me, that I shall never be judged according to the Law. This liberty it is that moves me so ardently and gladly to do and to suffer what my God wills, since He has taken away from me the cankerous anxieties of my heart over sin and Law. Yes, since *He* has taken upon Himself the great, heavy burden, the matter of my salvation, I will very willingly take upon me some of these lighter burdens—forsake the world and sin;

subdue my flesh, and serve my neighbor in love, with deeds, with words, and with patience; give the hungry bread; the homeless hospitality; visit some one in sickness and some prisoner, forgive some enemy and have patience with some troublesome fellow-being or some hard calling in life. Since my Lord has been so gracious as to be pleased with such little matters, it seems almost like a paradise to me that I may do the faithful, dear Lord some service pleasing to Him. All this my heart loves to do, because of His exceeding goodness and instituting this kingdom of grace, so that no sin is reckoned against me and I shall never be judged according to the Law.

Such is the true motive for doing that which is good. This is indicated by the word of the apostle: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died" (II Cor. 5.14); and this is what the apostle meant when he said: "Ye also were made dead to the law . . . that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7.4).

You certainly receive your reward here on earth also for the good that you do from a legalistic motive. It is certainly also profitable for your neighbors and your household; but it does not constitute the true *sancti-*

fication, neither is it the truly good deeds pleasing to God, of which He will make mention on the Judgment Day. So that if it be only a question of *salvation*, you may very well spare yourself the trouble of doing good and instead give yourself to a free life in sin, you will lose nothing by this; you will at any event not be saved by such a holiness as springs from a legalistic motive. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse" (Gal. 3.10). Only so much good as you do *because* you are undeservedly pardoned, and *free from the Law*—only so much true sanctification and good works do you have. Mark and remember this well, and write it indelibly into your mind: Only so much as springs from grace, from faith and love, from your freedom from the Law—only so much true sanctification do you have.

But here some one may, perhaps, ask: "Shall the Law, then, be of no service to a Christian in his sanctification? And is a Christian then so quickened by the joy of faith and love that he never does the good from any legalistic motive?" Answer: First of all, the Law is always of indispensable service and blessing in sanctification by the *guidance* and the *light* we have in its commandments; and, secondly, this guidance always becomes for us *a chastisement*, a wholesome and

needed chastisement and crushing humiliation for our crafty heart, which otherwise might soon fall into pride, security, levity, and other like abominations. But the motive itself and the very heart of a Christian's sanctification must be God's mighty grace. Understand this aright, and note: It is quite true that the light of grace in faith does not always burn with the same beautiful and quickening power; faith, joy, and love are often weakened during the journey, and however earnestly I may strive, I cannot at will take to myself such a burning faith as I would. But the matter does not depend on this. If I but have such confidence in my God through Christ that, whatever my condition, I can speak to Him as His child, can believe the state of grace itself (Rom. 5.2), albeit with a rather dry faith, which, however, keeps firmly to the assurances of the Lord, then this faith will bring about a willing spirit so that I gladly subdue my flesh according to His commandment. I do not then feel as light of heart as in happier times, when He rejoices my heart; no, as for my feelings, a legalistic heaviness often comes upon me in my walk, so that I feel far more the Law in my inner man than the grace and delight of the Gospel. But the distinction over against them that "busy with the works of the Law" consists

in this: They who are under the law “busy with the works of the Law” with intent and purpose, mark, they have outright *that conception* that our state of grace and our sanctification do depend on our labor of godliness, and are thus agreed with themselves in this striving, yes, what we are and do is the very song of their being, comes first and last. The true believer, on the other hand, even during his legalistic periods, is nevertheless an enemy of his own self-importance, as soon as he becomes aware of it. He censures and decries it and agrees with God at once in His Word, that in us is nothing but sin and weakness and only in Christ is both our righteousness and our strength. The believer presses on to lay hold of Christ and to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and he is certain that all will thereby be righted again: it is only weakness from which he is suffering. His mind and intention are therefore evangelical, it is only feeling and his old nature that are legalistic. And although he must often, as it were, force himself to the doing of that which is good, because he feels the resistance of his flesh, it is after all the great grace of God on which he believes that moves him to the desire of thus subduing his stubborn flesh. He loves the commandments of the Lord, even His threats, yes, His rod and

chastisement, and this because they assist the slaying of the evil flesh; but he has this very love for the Law and its threats because he believes the unmerited grace—and hence the depths of his heart and his motives are evangelical. It is far different if we become “captive under a yoke of bondage,” when our thoughts, first and last, are centered upon ourselves and what *we* should be and do; and by this the childlike confidence is smothered and the Law even becomes the *ruling* power in the conscience. Then the life of sin and impotence which the Law always brings about enters in again. And from this we can then see how necessary it is that the conscience be free from the Law even for true sanctification. Oh, that every Christian, therefore, during all the days of his life would take to heart the admonition of the apostle: “For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5.1). Thus our Lord Christ Himself also says concerning this matter: “Abide in my love.” ~~Abide~~ “in me.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15).

VII.

The Ground of This Glorious Freedom

“Yes,” you say, “I have, of course, seen glorious words and proofs of the great, comforting truth, that we who are lost before the Law and cling to Christ, shall not be judged according to the Law, but be as free from its judgments as the woman is free from the law of the husband, when he is dead and buried. I have also seen how entirely necessary this freedom is, not only in order to remain in the grace of God, but also for true sanctification. But it is, however, wholly impossible to be able really to believe and lay hold of this freedom for my own part. For, partly, it is altogether too glorious and gracious that I, poor sinner, shall live in such a constant and irrevocable grace with God as if no Law or sin existed; partly, also, I do not *feel* the least of such a grace and freedom, but feel rather the opposite, namely that I am still ceaselessly accused and judged by the Law. How can I, then, believe that I am entirely free from all judgments of the Law,

that the Lord God loves me and considers me as if I never sinned, as if no Law and therefore no sin existed, but purity alone, righteousness, and good will before His eyes—and all this only for the sake of Christ? No, it is too great, too glorious, and I surely *feel* the sin and the judgments of the Law upon me.”

This is a deep argument, not as to its thought, but as to its rootage, because it is imbedded in our very nature, for the Law and the ideas of the Law have certainly been obscured by the Fall, but lie, however, so deeply commingled with all human nature that even the heathen, who never have heard a word from Sinai, nevertheless plague themselves unto death because of the voice of the Law in their hearts (Rom. 2.14, 15). And, secondly, at the Fall it became our very nature not to believe and heed *God*, His work and Word, but only believe ourselves, our feelings and fancies. This is the reason why the most evangelical Christians, provided they are awake, are in feeling and conscience much more legalistic than evangelical—although they certainly also have much peace and joy in the faith, when they have learned to comprehend this freedom of theirs and receive grace to believe it.

But where shall we find a means against

the overmastering inclination of our nature only to see and feel the Law, yea, against all these mighty contradictions of feeling, conscience, reason, the unbelief, and the devil? 'There can be no more effective means against all this mighty power of unbelief than ceaselessly to consider the *grounds* of this glorious liberty of which we are now treating, consider whence this measureless boon is derived and on what it rests, that it is the very good pleasure and the very deed of the Almighty God, the work of His own beloved Son, through all His fulfillment of the Law and suffering its penalty in our stead. As the apostle says: "We were made a heritage—according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will; to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory" (Eph 1.11, 12). What, then, can I do to the matter? What is my power against the good pleasure of the Almighty? What can I say to it, when the great God himself has been pleased to do something after the counsel of His will? May He not do in His affairs whatever He will? When it has pleased Him to show this great, inexpressible grace to man, to establish this kingdom of grace on earth and send His own beloved Son under the Law, in order to fulfill for us all its demands and suffer for us its curse—what

can I do to that? It is certainly altogether too great and glorious; but what God does, indeed, is all great and incomprehensible. What I, poor being, am and do, feel and think, is on the other hand only as wind-blown straws compared with a great mountain. The Lord Christ says now expressly: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," when all flesh was through the Fall so corrupted that no man could fulfill the Law of God, but all men sinned, whether they would or not, and every soul therefore lay under an eternal curse. The Scripture says now expressly: "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. 4.4, 5). And again: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3.13). Yea, the Scripture says expressly: "*Christ is the end of the law*"—"Christ is *the end of the law* unto righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10.4). And the apostle explains the gracious thought and counsel of God in this wise: "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made

righteous" (Rom. 5.19). Mark the words well! This is God's eternal counsel as to man, and the good pleasure of His will. As we have become the servants of sin and death through the disobedience of the *one*, so we should also receive righteousness and life through the obedience of *One*. It is consequently *One* that shall fulfill the Law for all; it is through *the obedience of One* that all shall become righteous. How shall we in time and eternity sufficiently praise this inexpressible love of the Father?

First. We will now pause at one or two of the passages cited that speak most directly concerning the ground of our freedom from the Law, and in a quiet, simple meditation, as if we never before had seen such words, wait for the grace and presence of the Spirit of God, if so be that it may please Him to bless a few weary souls with the refreshing of faith and rest which Jesus promises to such souls. The rich and satisfied, on the other hand, He will leave empty. Let no one think that any and every one is to be able to perceive the gloriousness of the grace of God and receive the blessedness of faith. No, the Lord "hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9.18; Matt. 13.11, 12; 11.25). We must needs

bow before Him, if we are to receive the grace of His Spirit, otherwise we shall receive only stones for bread. The first of the passages we were to meditate on is found in Gal. 4.4, 5 and reads as follows:

“When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law.”

Mark this high, eternal ground for our freedom from the law.” “God sent his Son under the law.” “God sent his Son under the Law,” and as it reads here expressly: “That he might redeem them that were under the law.” Mark you, these are the very words, “that he might redeem them that were under the law.” You poor souls, praise and magnify Him forever! This very comforting main thought of the passage is so prominent that each and every one must see it.

But the holy apostle has written his words with much reflection and deep spirit so that they demand a searching consideration. He says first: “When the fulness of the time came,” that is, “the time appointed of the Father,” when the Old Testament regency (v. 2) was to end and all the promises of the prophecy and the types were to be fulfilled. These words, “When the fulness of the time

came," consequently direct our eyes to the long golden chain of divine promises throughout the Old Testament, the types and pictures, from the very first promise given on the day of the Fall of the seed of the woman which should bruise the head of the serpent, to all these divine foretellings and types in the complicated Levitic worship, where so many thousands of sacrificial beasts, beside the officiating priests, all typified the Great High-priest and the great Sacrificial Victim. Verily, an infinitely powerful, a thousandfold testimony of God, compared with which all our thoughts, fancies, feelings, and contradictions must pale and come to naught. What do we avail against a whole long world-age of thousandfold types and promises of God Himself?

And what do all these promises and all these bloody sacrificial beasts in the prefiguring worship say? In Hebrews 10.1-7 we read: "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year.

For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. *Wherefore when he [Christ] cometh into the world, he saith [to the Father], Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me;—Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.*” Thus the Son of God speaks, when He comes into the world. “In the book it is written of me”; the entire holy book of the Old Testament treats of Me, that “I will do thy will, O God.” It is not simply the sacrificial beasts Thou wouldest have,—O, Father, no, the body Thou didst prepare for Me—it was My body, which they all typified; it is My body which shall be the sacrifice, which Thou wouldest have, O God. May God open our minds to such an inexpressibly glorious text! Here we see the ground of our freedom from the Law. Here we see the explanation of the text: “Christ is the end of the law,” and “the Lamb of God.” God open our minds and hearts!

We have now seen how the holy apostle has cited the prophetic passage here quoted, Ps. 40.6, 7, with his eye on the Antitype of the Sacrifices, namely the body of Christ, which was to be given as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. But we read in the sixth verse of the Psalm quoted in part something which

is remarkable for our subject. It is this: "Mine ears hast Thou opened." And the word "opened" means pierced through. The expression plainly refers to a passage in the Levitical law that treats of such servants as wished to remain in the service of their master all their life, and as a sign of this voluntary service were to have their ears bored through. This legal enactment is found in Exodus 21, and reads thus: "If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him unto the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever." And this the Lord Christ has now in the prophecy applied to Himself and said to His Father: "Mine ears hast Thou bored through; I will not go out free; I will be Thy servant. I will do Thy will, O God. My body shall be the sacrifice, which Thou hast intended by all these sacrifices; in the book is written of Me, that *I will do Thy will, O God.*" And then the apostle adds: "by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

In the words of our text we read that the Son of God was placed under the Law; "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the

law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." He was consequently to be under the Law during His whole life, and that most assuredly not on His own account but "that he might redeem them that were under the law." From the eighth day, when He, according to the Law, received the circumcision, His whole life was one continual fulfillment of the Law for us.

The Law demands, justly and repeatedly, that we love God of all our heart, of all our soul, of all our might, of all our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves; but no one of us fulfills this. Then *Christ* came and *did it for us.* He loved God with all His heart and of all His soul; it was His meat that He did the will of the Father (cf. John 4.34) And He loved His neighbor as Himself. He gave His life for the brethren, yes, for His enemies. And the apostle says expressly, that all this took place *for us*, took place "to redeem them that were under the law." Consider all of this well, and then to your great and blessed surprise you will find that we never need to keep the Law in order thereby to possess the grace and salvation of God, but that this task is by the great mercy of God wholly laid upon another, upon our Mediator and Fulfiller of the Law. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only

begotten Son." The Fall was so completely destructive of all our powers, that in us was found not the least particle which was not poisoned and filled with sin and evil, so that not one single being of the whole race could fulfill the Law of the Lord, but everything which is in us wars against the Law in all its commandments; and this, too, is felt deeply and bitterly by those who have been touched by the holiness of God, so that they struggle and labor to fulfill the Law. And when God because of His eternal truth and righteousness could not yield one letter or tittle of the Law, and all flesh therefore lay under an everlasting curse, which we every day feel, then, constrained by His unchangeable mercy and love toward man, God in His gracious counsel determined to send His own Son to fulfill the Law for us. It is this that lies in the precious passage: "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that he might redeem them that were under the Law." And this is the reason why God does not look upon us and judge us according to the Law, and therefore "there is now no condemnation to them that are *in Christ Jesus*," but they are *in Him* as "pleasing" to God as if they had never committed a single sin.

Second. But it was not sufficient that the whole life of the Son of God on earth during more than thirty years was a continual fulfillment of the Law for us; He must also at last endure the punishment we had merited, namely the curse of the whole Law, in order to redeem us from the same. The second passage that we were to consider treats of this, and it reads:

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” (Gal 3.13).

Here, then, we have the final and chief ground for our freedom from the Law. Here we may see both terrible and glorious things. If we wish to cull from this passage and in briefer words to express the ground for the believers' freedom from the Law, it is as follows: *Christ a curse*—terrible sentence! *Christ a curse*—sublime mystery! The very Blessed One of God a curse—strange remedy! Curse becomes blessing, poison a drink of health, wrath grace, death life.

The words of the apostle are very deep and require once more thorough consideration. First, he uses the name of Christ (the Anointed). This leads us to think of the

whole office and the holy anointing of this person, whereby He has been consecrated for the high office of Atoner and Protector, *High-priest* and *King* of men; for these offices men were to be consecrated by anointment with sweet-smelling oil. Two comfort-bringing hints. The whole mission of the Son of God to earth, His *office* for which He had been anointed and consecrated by the Father, was precisely to be the *Atoner and Protector of men*. We ought then to expect something of the kind from Him. And, secondly, the sweet-smelling oil indicates that since all men after the Fall lay under the curse, they were before the holy God a stench and corruption; and that therefore Christ as the Anointed must now mediate in order that by the sweet smell of His ointment He might drive away the stench of our sins and make us well-pleasing unto the Father. Mark: It is always another that is to do it—not we, sinners—always another. This the Scripture indicates everywhere.

But now the apostle says that this Blessed One of the Lord—He in whom the Father was well pleased, “the Beloved,”—has become a *curse*. This is a terrible word. First, the word “curse” itself signifies something very terrible, namely all the evil with which God in the Law threatens sinners. Just as the

word "blessing" embraces all the grace of God and all the good which God in His love can outpour upon His friends in time and eternity; so its opposite, "curse," signifies first the divine wrath and abhorrence, then all the evil which God in this His holy wrath is able to bring upon His enemies in time and eternity. It would, indeed, have been frightful enough, if the apostle had written that Christ became cursed or overwhelmed by a curse. But the holy apostle uses the still more frightful expression that Christ *became a curse*, became the *curse itself*. In the same way in II Cor. 5.21 he says, "Him who knew no sin he (God) made to be sin on our behalf"—not only burdened Him with the sin of all the world, but *made Him to be sin*. By such peculiar expressions the Holy Spirit has signified that the Lord Christ was so deluged with the sin of all the world and with the curse of the Law that He could be considered as changed into nothing but sin and curse, could be called sin itself, the curse itself. But that which in this matter is of the greatest importance is that we see by the prophetic passage, Deuteronomy 21.23, which is cited by the apostle, that it was not merely before men but *before God himself* that Christ was a curse; for it is written: "He that is hanged is accursed *of God*." And this was not due

to the manner of death, hanging on a tree, but to the cause of it—sin—which had merited the punishment; for when Peter hung on the cross because of his faith and confession, he was not on that account accursed of God. But when the apostle here applies this word to Christ he has this great reason for doing so, that Christ *actually was before God a sinner*, a great sinner, a sinner above all sinners on earth.

And with this we come to the most thought-worthy circumstance explaining the frightful words, that Christ was a sinner in the sight of God and became a curse, namely, that all of it happened *for us*, as the words of the apostle also expressly state. He does not say that Christ became a curse on account of His own person, but for us—for us. All weight is here attached to the words: “for us.” For Christ, as far as His person is concerned, is certainly innocent, holy, and blessed and could therefore not because of His own person become “a curse of God”; but since according to the Law all great sinners—murderers for example—were to be hanged and be cursed of God, Christ must also according to the same Law be hanged on a tree for a curse. He has taken on Himself the person of a great sinner and murderer, yes, not merely of one, but of all sin-

ners and murderers together. For we are all before God great sinners and murderers and therefore subject to everlasting death and condemnation. Since Christ now had taken upon Himself our persons, our cause before God, our sins and the punishment which they merited, He must stand before God and pass for that which we are, namely sinners, murderers and malefactors, and as such suffer the penalty. This—that Christ should be the very chief of sinners on earth—all the prophets had clearly foreseen in the Spirit. The prophet Isaiah says: “Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . he was numbered with the transgressors” (Is. 53.6, 12). And in the fortieth Psalm we hear the same person who said: “Mine ears hast thou opened; Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of me,” immediately afterward make the lament, “Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head” (Ps. 40.12).

How strange this may sound to the great darkness of unbelief in our heart, we should, nevertheless, consider this, that, unless Scripture throughout lies as to the great fundamental doctrine that God “laid all our sins upon His Son,” and that Jesus is “the Lamb

of God that taketh away the sins of the world," all sins must be His sins as actually as if He himself had committed them. Concerning this our Doctor Luther says: "As Christ is for all sinners the Mediator and Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, He is not before God innocent and without sin, like as the Son of God in glory, but He is a sinner," a little while forsaken of God, who bears and has lying on his back the sins of Paul, who was a reviler and persecutor of God, the sins of Peter, who denied his Lord, the sins of David, who committed adultery and murder, and so forth. In brief: He is the person who now stands before God as the representative of all sinners and on whom is cast the sins of all men in the whole world who ever *have been*, who *are* now, and who *shall be*. For when the merciful heavenly Father saw that by the power of sin and the curse of the Law we were being so grievously oppressed and were in such severe imprisonment, that it was through eternity impossible for us to free ourselves by any strength of ours, He gave us His only beloved Son as a Mediator and Saviour, laid all the sins of all men upon Him, and said: Thou shalt be the sinner that took the forbidden fruit in Paradise; Thou shalt be David that committed adultery and

murder; 'Thou shalt be Saul, that persecuted and slew my saints; in brief, 'Thou shalt be that which *all men* are, as if 'Thou alone hadst committed the sins of all men; therefore attend now to the payment and satisfaction for them." Here are reasons and causes enough why Christ must become *a curse*. And it seems that there are reasons also for expecting some important fruits of so great a work as this, when the Lord lays the sins of all the world upon His beloved Son, casts Him under the curse of the Law, and lets Him hang upon a tree. O God, have mercy upon our poor blinded hearts, disperse the thick darkness, and banish the evil power which controls our minds, so that we are not fit to see Thy glory!

Let us now see what the apostle says that Christ accomplished by becoming a curse for us. The apostle says that Christ thereby *redeemed us from the curse of the Law*. And here he uses a word which properly means ransom, release. It comes from a word that means *market*, and was originally used of the freeing of slaves by purchase. At such a market a court was always established. When any one handed over the sum asked for a slave, in order to set him at liberty, this purchase must be examined by the court, certified, and established. This process at the

liberation of slaves furnishes us instructive hints as to the nature of the redemption brought about through Christ. First, it was an act of purchase, for which there always is required a value, a price of purchase which corresponds in value to that which is bought; and here the costly sum was not of silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ, or His obedience both of life and of suffering. Secondly, this liberation of ours took place through Christ according to law and justice; it was tested in the judgment of the heavenly Father, approved of and established, so that it is eternally valid, as the Scripture says: "He hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Hebr. 10.12), "having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebr. 9.12).

Yes, this is the testimony of the Scripture: Christ actually has redeemed us from the curse of the Law when He became a curse for us. And this we learned as children from our catechism to believe and confess: "Jesus Christ is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, secured and delivered me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood," and so forth. But how do we believe this? We have also seen how infinitely much it cost the dear Lord to redeem us, namely,

that He not only must leave His choirs of angels, hymning His praise, and during more than thirty years go about in the form of a servant, on an earth cursed by sin, willingly bearing the yoke of the Law, in order to accomplish a perfect fulfillment of the Law; but that He also at last must be a curse for us and permit all the brooks of Belial, all the wrath of the righteousness we had violated, all the anguish of death and hell to vent themselves upon Him. Oh, woe to the darkness of the blinded heart, that we cannot see the full meaning of all this! Could we but realize it, and in an everlasting glory and praise, in a blissful security and contentment give the dear and holy Lord the honor due Him, since by His precious redemption He has done all things well for us—rendered full satisfaction for our sins to gain us perfect freedom, security and salvation! Let the devil and sin rage ever so wildly in my flesh, let sins be a thousand times more numerous and more heinous than they are—if the Son of God was made sin for us and hung on a tree as a curse—this is certainly a thousand times more than all my sins. And further: If God has sent His Son under the Law, yes, under sin, death, and all the fury of the devil, for no other reason than our salvation, then I understand that God does not look for any

ability in us to overcome these powers; then I begin to see that it is as Paul says, God gave us the Law that every mouth may be stopped, and the world may be brought under the judgment of God, and not that we are to be righteous before the Law. But then I also understand that the Lord will not reckon sins to *them* who believe in His Son, and that He will never judge them according to the Law.

Oh, may God more and more open our minds that we may see these glorious things! And those who feel the need of this grace and comfort, but still, in spite of all the testimony of God as to His Son, cannot get it into their hearts—may they often hide themselves in a quiet prayer-chamber and continue to pray for faith and opened minds until the Lord gives them this precious gift. For after all everything depends on the mercy of God. And if we only had the eye of faith to see it, we would be altogether in Paradise—however unworthy we might be—such glorious things God has actually given us in His Son. God increase our faith!

VIII.

A Brief and Blessed Summary

If we now finally wish to make a brief summary of the principal points that belong to this blessed freedom—the sum total of all that Christ secured for us, when He became our Brother and Fulfiller of the Law, and at last became a “curse for us,”—then the Lord God has Himself already made this summary in a passage of the Holy Scriptures where He proclaims His gracious counsel concerning the instituting of a new covenant with men, a new and better way of salvation than the Covenant of the Law. May God open our minds as we now proceed to consider this!—The precious passage of the Bible is in Jeremiah 31.31-34, and reads as follows:

“Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was

a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."

True, indeed, this was not the first promise concerning the new covenant, and neither was it the last—we may truthfully say that all of the Old Testament is one great promise, one single great proclamation and prophecy of Christ and of the new covenant in Him, from the time that God on the day of the Fall spoke of a "seed of woman" that should "bruise the serpent's head," and down to the last chapter of the last prophet, where we read of "the sun of righteousness arising with healing in its wings" (Mal. 4.2). We have here previously considered how the whole Law and all the complicated sacrificial worship spoke only of Christ and of the sacrifice of His body. But the promise just quoted concerning the new covenant has its value in this, that it has summarized in *one passage*

everything which distinguishes the new covenant, and moreover, by plain and definite words of God Himself. But that nevertheless almost no man sees what is within, and begins to rejoice, thank, and love God for it, but nearly every man still walks with his whole soul in the old covenant of the Law—this is merely a remarkable proof of the power the devil has over the minds of men, and a proof of the truth of that which the Lord God right here says, that no brother shall teach the other to know the Lord. He, to whom God is gracious, obtains it, and the rest are hardened (cf. Rom. 11.7, 8). And He has hid “these things from the wise and understanding” and revealed them “unto babes” (Matt. 11.25).

First of all this, to begin with, ought to awaken the attention of every one that the Lord says: “I will make a new covenant—I will make a new covenant.” He says expressly: “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” and came with them to Mount Sinai. Mark, however, that the Lord says that He would make a “covenant” that would not be according to the covenant of the Law—not such a covenant, not such a covenant, He says. Oh, how strange, that nevertheless no man believes this, almost no

one knows of any other covenant than the covenant of the Law, that is to say, in a living manner!

But the Lord God also states explicitly wherein the difference between the two covenants should consist. It was especially in three points: First, that while in the former covenant the Law was written on tables of stone, and the hearts of men were unwilling so that the Lord "must compel them," now the Law was to be written in the very heart and in the mind. This means that God will give us the Holy Spirit's fervent desire and love for the good, which becomes in us an *inner, living law*. Secondly, that while the former covenant's laws and ordinances could be imparted by one man to another, because the moral law, although obscured, belongs to the very nature even of the heathen (Rom. 2.14), the new covenant, on the other hand, was such, that none could enter into it by all the teaching one brother can give to another, but, as Christ expounds this, they must "all be taught of God" (John 6.45). This is what Jesus often said: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him" (John 6.44). "No one knoweth . . . who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Luke 10.22). And the apostle: "No man can

say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." (I Cor. 12.3). But the third point of difference was that while in the former covenant there was always a strict demand for payment for sins and the sinner must suffer the penalty for his sins, in the new covenant, on the other hand, the sins were to be forgiven, remitted, not imputed, "be no more remembered." But this point was introduced by a significant "for"—"for I will forgive their iniquity" (Jer. 31.34), which shows that this forgiveness is the ground and reason for the two previous points. Yes, and so it is. It is the testimony of all Scripture and of all experience that then only does a man learn to know God, and then only is the Law written in the heart, by a fervent desire to run the way of the Lord's commandments, (Ps. 119.32), when He forgives man all sins and comforts his heart.

This is what the apostle affirms so strongly against those who even in his time thought that the comforting gospel doctrine, the preaching of faith (cf. Rom. 10.8), would make the law of none effect, and that on the contrary the Law was to work sanctification. He says to them: "Oh, foolish Galatians—this only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so

foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh? Did ye suffer so many things in vain? if it be indeed in vain. He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3.1-5). And this he also says to the Romans: "Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law" (Rom. 3.31). And thus the Lord God says here (Jer. 31): "The law shall be written in their heart and mind: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." And the event recorded in Acts 10. 43, 44, tells us that just as Peter spoke the word: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive *remission of sins*," the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. We must therefore learn thoroughly to reject the idea that there is still another preaching, besides the preaching of faith, which will give the Holy Spirit and sanctification. No, it is exactly this preaching of faith alone that gives the Holy Spirit, no other preaching does. No man becomes a believer and is justified in Christ without the Holy Spirit; and where the Holy Spirit

dwells, there He works sanctification. As also the old hymn verse says:

“With faith God’s Spirit comes, good, kind,
New life on us to shower,
And work in us another mind
And slay the carnal power.”

And all piety which is not born of grace and faith constitutes only the “dead works” of nature or “works of the law” forced forth, which are all under the curse (Gal. 3.10): Therefore the apostle says expressly that which we have considered above: “For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God” (Gal. 2.19); and again: “But now we have been discharged from the law, having died unto that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7.6). This the Lord God also means when He says here: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.—For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.” And this Divine doctrine of sanctification never excludes the loving and serious use of admonition, or the faithful husbandman’s cleansing of the branches, but it simply reveals the folly of cleansing the dead branches, which under all circumstances are to be burned, even

if they be ever so well cleansed. But this inner life, this love and desire for the good, comes only through grace overflowing upon a crushed sinner, for this grace melts the heart and gives the Holy Spirit. Thus we understand, then, the words of the Lord God: "I will put my law in their *heart*, for I will *forgive their iniquity* and their sins will I remember no more."

Our Church's father in the faith, Luther, speaks of this gracious counsel of God with words like the following: "When our Lord God could not make men pious and good by all His commandments, judgments, threats, punishments, and plagues, but saw how they only externally did a few compulsory deeds and inwardly became the more contrary toward Him, the more He forced and threatened them, then He said unto Himself: "I will use another method with men; I will begin to do them so much good that they cannot help loving Me. I will make a new covenant with them: I will give them My Son. I will let Him take upon Himself the fulfillment of the whole Law for their sakes; and at last He shall endure upon the accursed tree the condemnation which they have merited that they may be entirely guiltless before the Law. And then I will assure them of My eternal love and of their eternal

blessedness with Me in heaven. When they believe this, they will love Me, and be both blessed and holy. 'This is the covenant I will make with them, saith the Lord.' "

Of the same gracious counsel and eternal covenant of God for His Son's sake never to reckon unto *them* their sins, who live in His faith, never to judge them according to the Law—of this the evangelically enlightened Doctor Anton writes in the following manner: "The Law is God's unchangeable will and word; therefore the strictness in His Law, as being His own word, could not be remitted, appeased, or softened, except through a complete satisfaction in accordance with the Law. The Lawgiver could not possibly ever expect of fallen man himself to render satisfaction. Therefore He, the wonderful and faithful God, impelled by His eternal mercy and love for the fallen child, let His demand of perfect righteousness in man fall; but not otherwise than that He in His divine wisdom conceived another means of still maintaining His Law in full honor, namely that He gave us His Son for its fulfillment. Thereby the Law has lost nothing, but has rather gained both in fulfillment and in dignity. Because Christ's payment has by God been found valid, no satisfaction is any longer necessary for our salvation. And the Law suffers no dishonor,

whether by Christ, or by them who receive Him, His brothers and sisters, that live by His grace; yes, the Law retains even with all other men on earth its full dignity now as formerly, when they hear what a costly satisfaction God demanded and received. And the faithful are hid and concealed and “in Him *made full*” (Col. 2.10), wherefore also the Law cannot seek anything from them, but is completely satisfied.

Since, therefore, sin is now atoned for, and the Law satisfied, the believer has no longer any reason to fear the wrath of God; on the contrary, the whole Divine love and Fatherly favor is upon him, and no human reason can comprehend or believe the love wherewith God embraces and cares for such a child; for God is properly in His being an infinite love—God is love (I John 4.8). And this love is now no longer hampered by sin and Law. “*God commendeth (or declareth) his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life*” (Rom. 5.8-10). In other words, if God so loved man, when no atoner

interceded for him, when we were only "sinners" and "enemies," that He gave His only Son for us, how much more shall He not now love man when man's sin is removed and the blood of His own Son speaks for man, and he now through faith clings to God. The Scripture says that we are then "one body, and one Spirit" with Him (Eph. 4.4). But "no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church" (Eph. 5.29). Mark the mystery, the saved and believing man is God's own work; God himself has redeemed him; God himself has converted and sanctified him; and every one usually loves his own work. This is our great folly that we look upon ourselves and our own merit; if God looked to that, no flesh would be saved. As surely as God cannot lie, He looks not upon man's own merit, when man honors the Son and believes in Him. God sees man only in Him—and then man is exceedingly fair and precious in His sight. Thus the Scripture testifies: We are "to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1.6). So God Himself says: "Since thou hast been precious in my sight, and honorable, and I have loved thee." To *whom* does the Lord speak so? To some one so pious and holy

that he deserved His love? The Lord adds: "Yet thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.—I have not burdened thee with offerings, nor wearied thee with frankincense.—But thou hast burdened me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins" (Is. 43.4, 22-25).

Now since we thus are freed from all sin, the judgments of the Law, and the wrath of God, and are under the infinite love of God, are we not even now blessed? The Scripture testifies: "He saved us" (Tit. 3.5), "Now are we children of God" (I John 3.2), we are already friends of God and heirs of heaven (John 15.15, 17, 24). Is not all this that which is meant by being blessed? Pretorius says: "Listen to what I wish to ask you: If I am not yet blessed, but must together with the unbelieving wait until my last hour for my blessedness, what is Christ, then? What are, then, all the assurances of God? What is, then, my baptism and my regeneration? What, then, is my faith in Christ? Why has He given me His Holy Spirit? Why does He give me His body and His blood? Why do I thank Him? Why am I happy? Why do I call God my Father?"

All these things assure me that I am already blessed, although not yet at Home, not yet in the full enjoyment of my hope. But it is nevertheless just as certain as if I were already in heaven" (ANTON).

And he who even now is God's child and friend, and even now in this life declared free from all judgments of the Law—he shall also in the last Judgment be free from all his sins. When the Lord says that He has "cast all our (their) sins into the depths of the sea" (Micha 7.19) and that He will no more remember them, we may rest in confidence that they will not be brought forth on the last day. As also the Lord Christ indicates in his description of the Last Judgment (Matt. 25.31-46). There we hear the King recount a great number of good deeds which the blessed children at His right hand have done but not a single one of their sins. How does this come? Have these never had any sins? Mark, then, here for once, that the Lord God is in earnest and means His words on forgiveness of sins—that there is earnestness and truth in His words: "I will not remember thy sins." Christ solemnly declares: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5.24).

And do not now forget, that all which we have considered here is not vain words, but the holy covenant of the eternal, unchangeable God. Not merely has God given us a word concerning grace—which nevertheless ought to weigh more than heaven and earth, since it, of course, is impossible for God to lie (Hebr. 6.18)—but in addition, for yet further certainty, He has made it a covenant and testament. And this is established and confirmed with the oath of His majesty. For, says the apostle, “God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” (Hebr. 6.17, 18). And the Lord God often speaks of this covenant of His, calls it a covenant of peace (Ez. 37.26), and says expressly that it shall be an everlasting covenant (Ez. 37.26; Is. 55.3). And He adds that it shall be as immovable as the covenant which He made with Noah, that the waters should no more go over the earth, “so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee” (Is. 54.9). That God keeps the former covenant no more to drown the earth with waters, we most certainly believe; but

that He never will reckon our sins to us believers—this we do not believe with equal certainty and firmness. But the Lord God declares again and again: “For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed” (Is. 54.10). Oh, we ought, indeed, to let such divine assurances come home to our hearts, let the great, good God be a truthful God, and rest upon His covenant with hearty security. We have great reasons for doing so; yes, we have as great reasons for peace and security from the wrath of God as ever the blessed angels in heaven; and “in heaven no angel trembles before God,” an old teacher has said. “Yes,” you say, “the angels are sinless.” Certainly, but God’s everlasting covenant in His Son must be just as firm a ground of security as an angel’s purity! Christ is more than all angels. As surely as God does not lie in all His gospel concerning the giving of His Son for us, and the everlasting grace through His merit, so surely He will not reckon to believers a single sin unto condemnation. Or would God undo that which during thousands of years He has proclaimed in so many ways and so sacredly affirmed? Would God reject His own ransom money. His beloved Son? Then I, too,

wish to be rejected. Would God break His own oath? God preserve us from blasphemy.

What blessed security, what heavenly Sabbath rest and quietude for the wearied heart of a sinner when the Holy Spirit makes such circumstances living in the soul! It is of this that the prophet speaks: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever. And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting-places" (Is. 32.17, 18). It is of this the apostle speaks: "Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8.15). And this is that *freedom of the conscience* from the Law, which, to be sure, is not as perfect as the one we actually and in God's heart own—for our faith is imperfect; but our freedom from having sin reckoned to us *in the heart of God* is entirely perfect. Nevertheless even the freedom of our conscience is an important matter, which ought to be attended to with all care. For it is this freedom, or child-confidence, which is the life and heart itself of the new man, as also the life and power in all sanctification, as we have previously shown. And, besides, this peace of faith is the highest praise we can render to God for all His grace, the highest and most pleasing honor we can show Him.

IX

The Final Application

May all Christians, therefore, lay to heart the final admonition, given by the apostle to the Galatians, when he explained to them the freedom from the Law. With this admonition we, too, now wish to close. It reads as follows:

“For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage” (Gal 5.1).

Even many upright Christians are still so ignorant of the real nature of the spiritual life that they do not attach much weight to this admonition, do not understand that it is essential to life and salvation, but imagine that the good apostle by this only reveals the particularly devoted interest which he takes in the peace and well-being of the Galatians. For even in our own day a preacher of the gospel is often estimated in that same manner. They do not understand that their spiritual life is in any danger if the conscience is dragged down and made captive under the

yoke of bondage. May God awaken all such souls out of their error! The apostle has another understanding of the case. He makes this admonition so exceedingly important that he says that if you only lose your freedom of conscience and become captive under the Law, and begin to seek your righteousness in your own works, or expect life and sanctification from the Law (Gal. 3.2, 5), you have made "void the grace of God" (Gal. 2.21) and crucify Christ afresh (Hebr. 6.6; comp. Gal. 3.1). Then you "are perfected in the flesh" (v. 3), you are "under a curse" (v. 10), you are a "son of the handmaid," and after all your service you shall be "cast out" (4.30). You "are severed from Christ," you "are fallen away from grace" (5.4). And he says that this point is so delicate and sensitive that if you intentionally and purposely include ever so little of your own deeds as necessary for salvation, and do not let Christ alone be sufficient for that, faith is spoiled, "the lump leavened"; for this is what he means when he says: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (v. 9).

When our whole nature now leans so strongly toward self-righteousness, self-significance in spiritual things, through the self-idolatry with which the serpent in the Fall filled man, so that nothing is so foolish

to the reason and mortifying to the heart as this that we are wholly incapable of the good, but as utterly lost must receive everything by grace, and as a gift, through Christ; then each one ought to understand that the danger of being made captive under the Law is not so slight as the ignorant think. Add to this, secondly, that our enemy, the devil, knows well that whatever else he may do to us, he has gained nothing essential so long as we still remain in the faith, in Christ our city of refuge; that then only will there be death, when the devil has succeeded in leading us from the love of Christ to our own labor in legal servitude and unbelief, so that life in the Son of God ceases. Yes, then there will be death, even if we retained the most beautiful life. Therefore we can in truth say that all the devil purposes with all his attacks and temptations, with all his hellish zeal, his deceit and power, finally aims at this, that he may lead us away from the good child-relation to God, from "the freedom for which Christ set us free," and bring us into bondage and unbelief. Not without reason does the apostle use the word "*entangle*"—it is a hunter who would "entangle" us—and if we only become entangled in the yoke of the Law's bondage, we are also immediately bond-servants to the inner life of sin, yes, to the devil and death.

The devil can bring less experienced Christians to this bondage in a very simple way, by merely pointing out that they still are sinners, and that God hates and judges sin. Here he now has two truths, by which, however, he permits us to lead us from the sound truth. Although we are truly born again, and have a holy and willing spirit, by which we have become new men, the flesh, the old heart, is nevertheless filled with all the corruption of sin which the Fall of Adam brought on, and which operates in countless directions, in thoughts, feelings, desires, words and deeds, in sluggishness toward the good, in cool indifference of the heart toward God and our neighbor, disinclination toward the Word and prayer, sinful emotions, and the like. Then the Word of God arises and condemns all this, and still I am unable to free myself from it; how shall I then be able to believe that I am in a constant grace and friendship with God?

The temptation to despair and unbelief becomes especially severe when the devil puts before me *God's own words* which seem to condemn me. First of all the Bible contains a great number of terrible threatenings against the secure, ungodly hypocrites. Since the world is full of these, the Word of God must, of course, contain a good deal for them.

But a soul that is poor in spirit, who is chastised by the Spirit, feels, indeed, all kinds of evil in himself and he says: "Yes, precisely, *I* am secure, *I* am ungodly, hypocritical, and so forth—for all this surely lies here in the old heart." This the devil then uses to murder and destroy my poor faith. Further, since every Christian must hold in reverence the commandments of the Law as unchangeable rules of guidance, even though he is continually condemned by those very commandments, how can he then still believe that he stands in a constant grace and friendship with God? We were, or how? not only to know but also to fulfill the will of God. But in spite of everything which grace has worked in me, I can still not find that I *fulfill* the commandments of God; and so the judgment of the Law immediately comes upon my conscience. Oh, what grace and wisdom are here required, nay, what a miracle of God, what a mighty help of God, if we are to be able to remain firm of faith in God's grace!

It will here be quite necessary to consider deeply and thoroughly what God's *covenant of grace* implies, namely that all these judgments and threats fall only on *them* who are *without Christ*—or fall merely on *the sin itself* and *the outward man*, but do not at all touch *the state of grace* itself, as long as I am under

Christ; and further, that God, to be sure, wishes by His Law to punish and correct that which is wrong in my life, yes, even by external punishments and plagues pursue and slay my sins; but that I at the same time am in an eternal grace; that He is angry only at my enemy, sin, which I, too, after the spirit hate, but that He is not angry with *me*, who in Christ am perfectly free from all wrath, all the judgments and threats of the Law, have a constant forgiveness and am already inscribed in heaven as His child and heir. Christ very plainly indicated this, when He rebuked His disciples for their strife as to who among them was the greatest—a most disgusting sin—but at the same time, as if nothing had happened, speaks of their seats of honor in heaven (Luke 22.24-30). So also John says: “These things write I unto you, my little children, that ye *may not sin*. And *if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father*” (I John 2.1, 2). It was this alone he wished—that they might not *sin*; but if, alàs, they did sin, they were to know, however, that they had an Advocate in heaven; of this comfort they should let no one rob them. How necessary is it not to *consider this distinction deeply and thoroughly*, this, to let the commandments and threats of the Law fall only on the *sin*, but not on our

child-confidence in God, and to retain our certainty of everlasting grace through Christ. This is the true freedom from the Law.

The pious Spener has spoken of this with much thoughtfulness and caution. He says: "The believers are free from the Law in this sense, that they have a perfect and *constant forgiveness* of their sins. And it is to be noted that this forgiveness consists of two points. First, that *those* sins which man committed before his conversion when he was not in a state of grace, and those sins by which, peradventure, he once lost his state of grace, are, if he again becomes converted and comes to Christ, so perfectly forgiven, however great they may have been, that of them shall no more be made a remembrance. Secondly, the forgiveness consists in this, that as long as man stands in the faith, and consequently does not willfully serve sin, all his indwelling corruption and his sins of frailty, which still cling to him and through which he errs, whether it be through omission, or imperfect doing of the good, or through sinful desires, thoughts, words, and deeds (which if he were not in Christ, would be condemnable), all these sins God by His divine grace does not reckon against him, but for Christ's sake passes over them, just as if they had never been com-

mitted. This is the fundamental thought in the words of Paul: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus—who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8.1, 4). Consequently they still have the flesh remaining, which in and by itself is subject to the curse of the Law; the flesh still incites them to walk after its instincts, awakens in them therefore evil lusts and desires, and at times even gains some advantage over them, so that actual sins arise, which in themselves would merit a curse. But because they still are in Christ Jesus, from whom nothing but unbridled sinning and unbelief can separate them, such sins are to them, for Christ's sake, not unto condemnation. For they themselves are not under the Law. There exists here a matchless bliss, without which our other comfort would be altogether too weak. For even if we otherwise knew that our sins, even such great sins which now are long since past, were forgiven us, when in true repentance we acknowledged them and sought forgiveness, we could, however, not even one single moment do anything else but pray for forgiveness, because no moment passes during which we do not notice, or otherwise must fear, that we have sinned in one way or another, or at least have neglected some good, and hence our present

sins would always be at hand. This would then keep us in continual anguish and discouragement and never allow us to turn our faces with joy to God; and this would diminish our power for good. But this is our glorious comfort that as long as we stand in the faith (and consequently do not give sin the freedom it seeks), we are *completely free from the Law*; that the Law is not permitted to condemn us for our sins that still beset us, but God simply forgets them for Christ's sake, as if they did not exist. As was said before, sins are in themselves always condemnable, but they are not reckoned against those who are in Christ. This does not do away with their humility and piety, on the contrary it increases them, and gives to the believers a glorious boldness of faith, which is the ground of all spiritual power."—
(SPENER.)

Only it behooves us here not merely to understand and know this, but also earnestly to begin using this wisdom of ours when the actual warfare is on. And here we must make mention of a very destructive fault, which especially clings to certain younger and unsteady Christians—that they do not earnestly utilize their knowledge of God's covenant of grace, when the enemy assails them through the Law and the conscience, but

walk mildly subject to every suggestion, and consequently are dependent on temporary impressions. This is not what is meant by keeping the Word of the Lord and establishing the heart in grace. We can not sufficiently praise the wisdom speaking in a sermon of Luther, where he teaches us how we may answer the Law and the devil when we are unrighteously attacked in the conscience (Luther, third Sunday after Trinity). With many and powerful words he here shows how necessary it is to distinguish between two things, conscience and life, faith and walk. When it is a matter of faith and conscience, we are not to give room to any Law, provided we wish to stand fast in the freedom, but let that be perfectly settled that in us there is sin constantly, and that before the Law our righteousness is at an end, but that we have an entirely different righteousness, in which we can stand before God, namely, that the Son of God has been under the Law for us, and has also become a curse for us. On the other hand, when it is a matter of our life and walk, we are to accept with all submission the reproofs and corrections of the Law, and can then never give sufficient heed to God's commandments. In the faith and in the conscience we are to live as free "as if no Law had been given on earth, neither one nor ten

commandments," but when it is a matter of life, we are to be as slaves, not because of the threats of the Law or because of the promises, but of fervent desire and love, of joyous, hearty thankfulness for our precious freedom from the judgments of the Law.

"In this way," says Luther, "a Christian must learn so to rule his conscience before God, as not to permit himself to be ensnared by any Law, but whenever any one seeks to assail his faith by the Law let him defend himself against it, and do as Christ does here and in other places where He shows himself in His course so firm, singular, and strange, that neither Moses nor any zealot of the Law can move Him, although He otherwise is the most humble, the most gentle and friendly of men. Let us do likewise. But it is a difficult and great art, which no one but our Master knows perfectly. For the devil sports with our flesh and blood, when he grips man in his conscience and takes him to task for what he has done and for what he has not done." Especially is this so, if he has first succeeded to lead him into some grievous sin. He now tries to bring him to think that he is thereby completely fallen from grace and that he must experience something peculiar in his heart as the sign of a new pardon. And then this peculiar ex-

perience does not come, but rather, as is common when the conscience becomes bound in unbelief, the Law only works a peculiar dryness and deadness in the feelings. Or if a Christian, one beyond doubt in grace, is beset by a disposition very troublesome in certain respects which he never quite escapes, but, with all his weeping, praying and use of the means of grace, is still surprised by the sin which always "besets him," and the devil suggests to him that this is the same as the *rule* of sin, or to "*do sin*"—oh! in both these events the hellish enemy can frightfully torture a man and fill his whole soul day and night with a roaring din of threatenings by the wrath and curse of God, so that he believes that he is the most monstrous sinner on earth.

How shall I in such severe circumstances escape being made captive under the Law? Aye, now it is a question of being furnished with the proper arms and of being able to "withstand the devil, steadfast in the faith," and to answer: "If my sin even were still more terrible, my Lord Christ shall not be made a sinner. I will, none the less, render honor to His blood and His truth. I still remember the words of the everlasting Father: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be

red like crimson, they shall be as wool' (Is. 1.18). Even if I for a long time may not feel anything special in my heart, I will, none the less, let His words be divine truth. Get thee hence from me, Satan! Sin shall not condemn me, as long as Christ lives. And if the sin were, as thou sayest to me, my own doing, I would no longer weep over it (Rom. 7.20). And how dost thou, false spirit, wish in such a perverted way to make a saint of me, since thou speakest of my having sinned? Why, I have never pretended that I was sinless. My own righteousness before the Law is a thing of the past so that, as regards my pardon, what I am, or do, or have done counts for nothing. The only thing that counts here is what my Lord Christ has done for me, what He still is, and what He does as my Advocate with the Father. We are now in the bridal-chamber, where only the Bridegroom may be with the bride."

But the Law continues to knock at the door and says: But you ought nevertheless yourself, too, be pious and holy and keep the commandments of God, if you wish to be saved. Answer: It is true that I ought to be holy and keep the commandments of God; but merely because you add the words, "If you wish to be saved," I will not now listen to you at all. Because my conscience is

attacked by a condition for salvation taken from the Law, I wish to be rid of you entirely. For in the question as to my salvation my life does not count at all, simply because it is already settled that I am lost before the Law, but also that I have a perfect righteousness, in the abundant merit of my precious Bridegroom. He has for me fulfilled all which the Law could ever demand. I neither can, nor do I wish to appear before God with any other righteousness. Come at the right moment, when it is a question of my life, with your reminders. Remind me, for example, to be merciful, patient, humble, chaste, forgiving, and so on, when my neighbor needs anything of the like from me. But here, when it is a question of my relation to God, I will not listen to you, for then I have quite another righteousness, a perfect, yes, divine righteousness. Praised be the Name of my Lord Jesus.

In this way a Christian may defend himself and prevail against the suggestions of the devil and the threatenings of the Law, whether for past or present sins, in this way, namely, that when the Law tries to attack the *conscience*, and to deny my *state of grace*, I then daringly beat him off, and say: I shall gladly do good works when I am among my fellow men, who need them; but here

when my conscience is to stand before God, I will know nothing of that. For here my life and walk do not avail, but only my Lord Christ.—“But if it is here that I am lacking, that I do not do these good works among men as I ought, what then?” This is certainly to be deplored and here it were well if some improvement took place—by a more watchful walk your conscience would also experience less severe attacks. But if you are to be *saved*, it is, nevertheless, needful, that you with all your power pierce through the thick cloud of contradictions and, despite all, let Christ count for more than all your poor being. Otherwise you will for ever perish. Through faith everything can be remedied; through unbelief there is naught but death and condemnation.

Much more ought to have been said on this precious subject, yet we must leave it. We wish only to add that this lofty grace, freedom from the Law, is not at all proclaimed to the hard, presumptuous and unbroken souls who know the art of believing and of being secure all too well, or to those who with a pretty evangelical confession also wish to retain full freedom for the flesh and to live as it pleases them. No, thus says the apostle: “As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of

God" (I Pet. 2.16). As to the flesh, true Christians are, alas! indeed, weak, so that they, too, can err and fall miserably but there is in them however a God-fearing spirit which cheerfully accepts admonition and seeks improvement. But they, on the other hand, who wish by their advocacy of evangelical freedom to defend a carnal life conformed to the world, have not the Spirit of the Lord.

But the apostle Paul admonishes even the believers not to allow the false heart to lead them astray into the misuse of this precious freedom. He says: "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another" (Gal. 5.13).

Oh, that all the children of God might in time take to heart also this admonition! It is a common sickness, or perversion, of our minds, that we are bound where we should be free—in *the conscience*; and altogether too free where we should be bound—in *the flesh*. Let us watch! Since we have an everlasting freedom from the judgments of the Law, let us fervently love the commandments of the Law so that with cheerful mind we serve our neighbor in love, with words, deeds, and patience. Let us beware lest we grieve the Holy Spirit by sins against His holy commandments. Watch and pray and flee when you

see the temptation approaching. Flee cheerfully and willingly, since God is eternally gracious toward you and opens His bosom to you. But if you have been so hapless as to fall, know that you have an "Advocate with the Father," and you shall not perish if you flee to Him and seek restoration, grace and comfort, and a new purpose to watch more earnestly hereafter.

Such, then, our whole way will be. The Lord be with us on that way, and protect us both on our right hand and on our left hand!

Rise from thy stupor, heart so uneasy;
 Why so completely forget what thou hast?
 Christ is forever
 Thy loving Saviour,
 He's still the same as He was in the past.

Though thou at times can not feel it, nor see it,
 Though so unholy and sinful within,
 Jesus hath bought thee,
 And mercy brought thee,
 And still upholds thee, and saves thee from sin.

God is in Christ now thy Friend and thy Father;
 Jesus thy Brother on Calvary died;
 And by His merit
 Has sent His Spirit,
 To be thy Strength, and thy Comfort, and Guide.

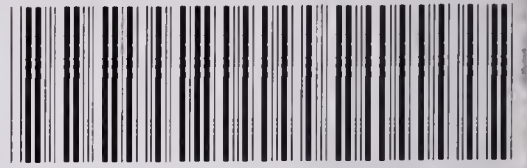
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